GENDER & TRIBE

WOMEN, LAND AND FORESTS

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GENDER AND TRIBE

Women, Land and Forests in Jharkhand

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kali for women

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Govind Kelkar
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Abbreviations

AJSU	*All Jharkhand Students' Union*
CNT Act	*Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act*
JCC	*Jharkhand Coordination Committee*
JKD	*Jharkhand Kranti Dal*
JMM	*Jharkhand Mukti Morcha*
JMMS	*Jharkhand Mahila Mukti Samiti*

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1

An Analysis of the Women's Question

THE DIVISION OF LABOUR

The division of labour between men and women seems to be the most "natural" aspect of human society, something that is virtually beyond question, seemingly based on the actually natural (biological) division of labour in procreation. This division, however, seems "natural" only because it is such an old, pre-historical aspect of human society, for other than the biological division of labour, whereby women alone can bear children and nurse them, there is no other such actual division in human society. Indeed, one can even say that, since it is precisely labour (the conscious transformation of nature) that distinguishes human society from the rest of the animal kingdom, there is nothing natural in any order or division of labour in human society.

The natural reproductive role of child-bearing and nursing was at one time thought to be the factor that constrained the "economic" activities of women, being translated, for instance, into restriction to such activities as gathering, rather than hunting. In one way or another, it is the supposed social construction of the biological fact of a capacity to bear and nurse children that, according to this analysis, is the base of the division of labour. See for example the analysis by Michelle Rosaldo: "Although the fact that women give birth to and nurse children would seem to have no necessary entailments, it appears to provide a focus for the simplest distinction in the adult division of labour in any human group. Women become absorbed primarily in domestic work because of their role as mothers." (1974, 24)

"There is a strikingly uniform division of labour in hunting-gathering societies. The women gather; the men hunt." (G.P.Murdock, 1968, 335) But even in this division, which itself is not so uniform, neither the effort, skill nor the distance covered in gathering are anything less

than what is regularly involved in hunting. (Coontz and Henderson, 1986, 21) Further, hunting of small game by women is a regular feature of foraging tribes, including the Birhor of Jharkhand. (Jyoti Sen, 1966) The ritual *jani shikar* (women's hunt) of the Oraon, Munda, Santhal and Ho suggests an earlier period when women of these tribes may have regularly participated in hunting, a participation that subsequently became ritual as weapons came under male monopoly.

Recent evidence on the Agta of the Philippines has challenged the "incompatibility of female reproductive roles with hunting." (Mukhopadhyay and Higgins, 1988, 476) In the study as summarized in this review, it is pointed out:

> There most women in every age group including pregnant, menstruating and lactating women, hunt regularly. Men and women take hunting trips of similar distance and duration; kill the same range of animals, including large animals; and work in mixed-sex as well as same-sex teams. Although pregnant women and women with children under six months reduce their hunting somewhat, the peak years of female hunting activity coincide with their prime childbearing years. Women themselves say hunting is no more incompatible with childcare than other subsistence activities; nor, they say, is carrying babies on hunting trips a handicap.

Even the exclusion of women from "the individualistic hunting of large mammals seems to be closely related to the making and using of hunting weapons and associated with economic and/or religious ideas." (Watanabe, 1968, 74) Further, for the Agta, "Among women who do not hunt, lack of hunting dogs rather than incompatibility with childcare is the most frequently cited explanation." (Mukhopadhyay and Higgins, 1988, 476) Whether it is hunting weapons or hunting dogs (which are also really hunting "weapons"), it is the economic factor of the ordering of society that ensures women's lack of access to such resources and that affects their participation in hunting; there is no natural limitation that is at work here. As pointed out, "There is now no evidence of any absolute constraints that prevent women—regardless of their reproductive state—from performing any activity performed by men. If none can be observed, then 'constraints' should be recognized as preferences. . . " (Mukhopadhyay and Higgins, 1988, 476). The division of labour between the sexes, even in the early stage of foraging, is then anything but natural, or an extension of the natural. It is, rather, a construction of society.

Whether the division of labour was initially consciously decided upon, or was stumbled upon accidentally, once established as a social norm, it came to acquire the force of a law, being, therefore, not voluntary but forced. Because it is not voluntary, the division of labour acquires the status of a "natural" force, one that dominates society.

What is the meaning of the division of labour in terms of the relations between those performing the (two) different spheres of activity, the two genders of men and women? Since these are two parts of what is a whole, social labour, the two genders must, along with the division of labour, simultaneously establish a relation with each other, a relation of production and its concomitant, one of consumption. As Marx and Engels pointed out in *The German Ideology*, ". . . the division of labour implies the possibility, nay the fact, that intellectual and material activity, that enjoyment and labour, production and consumption, devolve on different individuals. . ." (1845, 45)

The social division of labour, or, to put it in other words, the formation of the two genders of men and women, is then not a neutral matter. It is a social, not a merely technical division of labour, a social order, not an administrative arrangement. Further, the division of labour between the sexes is not merely a family matter. Established within the family, it exists in the extra-familial, social sphere too. The exclusion of women from the political or social spheres, as, for instance, observed among the Jharkhand tribes, is a feature of the social division of labour into the "public" and "private" domains. (Rosaldo and Ortner, 1974)

This social order or relation of production is simply another term for property. Involved in this relation of production are both the control and disposition of labour power and also the distribution of the products of labour. It is for this reason that the division of labour in the family is referred to (in *The German Ideology*) as the first form of property:

> This latent slavery in the family, though still very crude, is the first form of property, but even at this stage it corresponds perfectly to the definition of modern economists, who call it the power of disposing of the labour-power of others. Division of labour and private property are, after all, identical expressions: in the one the same thing is affirmed with reference to activity as is affirmed in the other with reference to the product of the activity. (1845, 46)

A division of labour, including the primordial division of labour that created the two genders of men and women, is, then, a form of property. In fact, it is the first form of property. Or, to put it another, equivalent way: the family, as the social institution within which the division of labour between the genders is expressed, is itself a form of property. This point, expressed so forcefully in *The German Ideology*, has been reiterated by some feminists. Christine Delphy, for instance, points out, "They [women] are neither selling what they produce for money, nor their labour for a wage. Their labour power is being given in return for maintenance." (1984, 38) And again, "Consequently, as soon as a 'lot' is attributed to women, Blacks or proletarians (the 'lot' consisting not of tasks but of jobs and thus relations of production) the hierarchy (the valuation in Leclerc's terms) is set up. It is not established after, nor independently, but in and by the very process of attributing 'lots'; by the social, not technical division of labour." (207)

That a division of labour is not something neutral but inevitably connected with particular relations of production, can be seen in the role of certain taboos or prohibitions. For instance, in all the agriculturist (cum-forager) tribes of Jharkhand there are universal taboos against women ploughing, or even touching the plough, and against women roofing the hut. The very strong taboos against such activities are themselves understandable only if such activities had, in fact, been carried out by women in an earlier period. Prohibitions, enforced with dire sanctions, were necessary to enforce a new division of labour. Since some manner of force (perhaps only a ritual force) had to be employed to establish the new division of labour, this could only have been possible if those enforcing the new division of labour already had force at their command, that is, they had a hierarchically higher position.

In the origins of class formation or stratification, it is quite likely that primacy must be given to the factor of the division of labour and a concomitant labour control. (Gary Webster 1990, 345) Without such a division and control of labour which, for example, excluded some people from political decision-making, it is difficult to see how a section could come to hold power.

The division of labour can be in various fields, not only in the economic. In a study of Band Societies (1982, 92), Annette Hamilton points out that "it is in the realm of the 'religious' that the first hints of truly 'economic differentiation' are to be found." This is no contradic-

tion of the position stated above; what it does, however, mean is that a change in ritual status, a division of labour in ritual matters, may anticipate changes in production relations.

The priority of division and control of labour does not, however, necessarily hold for the development of all subsequent (i.e. other than the original) stratifications. In these, the capture of political power may precede the enforcement of a new division of labour. Of course, once established, the new division of labour would have additional consequences in strengthening hierarchy.

The strong prohibition against women ploughing must be seen in the context of the known importance of women in hoe agriculture, where the main instrument (the digging stick that became the hoe) was generally employed by women. Further, in the agriculture prevailing in Jharkhand women play the major role in all agricultural operations, other than ploughing. Overall, their contribution to even field labour itself is more than that of men. The social prohibition on women ploughing is key to establishing (justifying) men's right to the land. The prohibition is a way of establishing a division of labour, which implies both a (political) hierarchy and a form of property.

The prohibition on roofing, again, is a way of emphasizing men's superiority in the home and women's dependence on them for a home. Is there any such or similar prohibition among the forager (hunter-gatherer) Birhors and hill Korwas? Both make houses of leaves and sticks arranged into a conical, tent-like structure. Birhor men and women together participate in all activities including hunting (which, at least now is restricted to small game). There are no reports of any prohibitions such as that on women doing the roofing, and with their minimal division of labour and in the absence of any property relation to land, it is highly unlikely that there would, in fact, be strong prohibitions of this kind.

As against the above analysis of the division of labour, which follows from the approach in *The German Ideology,* Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* holds that in the phase of society preceding the establishment of private property, "They [men and women] are each master in their own sphere: the man in the forest, the woman in the house." (1884, 218) The "world historic defeat of the female sex" is identified with the change from the earlier position, in that "The man took command in the home also. . . " (120)

The same point is repeated by Eleanor Leacock who, studying foraging band societies, finds a clear-cut division of labour in oper-

ation, but holds that women and men were "separate but equal". (1981, 136) According to her, ". . . women were autonomous in egalitarian society—that is, they held decision-making power over their own lives and activities to the same extent that men did over theirs. . . " (134). Leacock finds inequality of hierarchy arising from the shift in the nature of production—the shift from production for use, to production for exchange introduced by colonialism.

Even, however, in a situation where each is "master" (!) of his/her own sphere, there can still be domination of one gender over the other and control of labour power. One of the spheres, the so-called public sphere of men, of war (politics) and the forest, dominates the other sphere, the so-called domestic sphere of women. Such a division of labour, therefore, does not preclude a relation of dominance. On the contrary, as is pointed out in *The German Ideology*, with a division of labour there will inevitably be an "unequal distribution of labour and its products" (46). Such a relation of production necessarily accompanies even this "primitive division of labour" between the sexes.

Maurice Godelier makes a similar criticism of Leacock's analysis: ". . Leacock's work does stand in need of criticism: for, however meagre our historical and anthropological knowledge, however narrow the range of cases oberved, and however ethnocentric and androcentric the information so gathered, it seems at the moment reasonable to suppose that men have so far dominated power in the last analysis." (1981)

At the same time, the existence of some degree of autonomy within the dominated sphere, does give a certain measure of power to women and limits their exploitation. This power is completely lost when the man takes "command in the home also". This taking "command in the home also" is the final point in the "world historic defeat of the female sex", the defeat which fully enslaved women and established patriarchy, but it is not its starting point. The starting point of this world historic defeat of the female sex is the establishment of the division of labour that created the two genders, men and women.

There is an old tradition of analysis which equates women with nature and men with culture. At one time this was used to explain the necessity of men's political domination over women, coexisting with the social-biologistic view of the naturalness of men's domination. A counter (corollary?) to this view, was the notion of women as natural beings "the carriers of a new morality through which the artificiality

of civilization could be transcended." (Jordanova 1980, 43)

These earlier analyses rested essentially on the difference between women's and men's roles in procreation. Maria Mies goes further in holding that "Such a division (of labour between men and women) is a necessary consequence of all human interaction with nature." (1988, 69) So the question is not "When did a division of labour arise between men and women?" but rather "How did this division of labour become a relationship of dominance and exploitation; and why did this relationship become asymmetric and hierarchical?" (69) For Mies the asymmetric division of labour arises from the "qualitatively different bodies" with which men and women act upon nature as a result of which "women and men appropriate nature differently." (1988, 73)

Once again we are back to biology as the determinant of the asymmetric social division of labour. Freud used "Anatomy is destiny" in order to establish a biological basis for women's position in society. Maria Mies has stood Freud on his head in order to establish a biological basis (different bodies) for the asymmetric division of labour.

The analysis of the feminine principle has, however, been given a new dimension by Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive* (1988), where the base is women's role in production, whether in forest-based gathering or in agriculture. Contrary to Vandana Shiva's analysis, neither gathering nor what she calls "subsistence" production are the exclusive province of women. In various forager tribes there is no simple dichotomization of subsistence activities by sex.

THE EXCHANGE OF WOMEN

If the division of labour between the sexes seems so natural as to be a necessary feature of human society, the exchange of women, instituted through the marriage relations that are formalized in kinship systems, seems (as with Levi-Strauss) to be an essential requirement for culture. The division of labour is to nature, as the exchange of women is to culture. Levi-Strauss's analysis has the great merit of insisting that matters like the prohibition of incest and endogamy and the corresponding exchange of women, are created by society; they are the products of culture, and not in any way the result of natural factors, such as biological requirements.

Further, Levi-Strauss identifies the universal "exchange of women" as the source of their subordination.

> "The total relationship of exchange which constitutes marriage is not established between a man and a woman. . . but between groups of men, and the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners. . . This remains true even when the girl's feelings are taken into consideration, as, moreover, is usually the case. In acquiescing to the proposed union, she precipitates or allows the exchange to take place; she cannot alter its nature." (1969, p.115)

But like all analysis that remains at the epistemological level of exchange, the above too is unable to explain the necessity of the very institutions it seeks to account for. The relations of production that underlie and determine the exchange relations are not revealed by it.

Gayle Rubin's (1975) analysis of the "Political Economy of Sex" attempts to reinterpret Levi-Strauss from a feminist angle. But it suffers from the same weakness of remaining at the level of exchange and not going beyond it to production relations. (Hartstock, 1985) Rubin proposes to ". . . pursue what Engels abandoned when he located the subordination of women in a development within the mode of production." Rather than an analysis of the mode of production she proposes to take up the "other aspect" mentioned by Engels, that of reproduction, and finds the "ultimate laws of women's oppression within the traffic in women, rather than within the traffic in merchandise." (175)

The source of capitalist profit does not lie in the "traffic in merchandise" but in the extraction of surplus value from wage labour. So also, the "ultimate laws" of women's oppression cannot be sought in the "traffic in women". Rather, the "traffic in women" has itself to be explained, just as the "traffic in merchandise" has to be explained. By inverting the position and explaining exchange as production, which is what Rubin does, the character of these relations (of production and exchange)—that they are created by people in the course of history—is lost; instead, people become the instruments of something else—"signs" in the case of Levi-Strauss, kinship systems in the case of Rubin. This transformation of subject into object is seen, for instance, when Rubin says, "Kinship systems *require* a division of the sexes." (198, emphasis added)

The structuralist analysis of the "exchange of women" was useful

in that it placed the oppression of women "within social systems, rather than in biology." (Rubin, 1975, 175) But by remaining at the level of exchange (Levi-Strauss) or identifying exchange as production (Rubin), as the source of surpluses, the analysis is unable to explain exchange itself.

This exchange analysis of women's oppression has its own meaning in political terms. For Levi-Strauss the position of the oppressor itself is lost as ". . . the sexual division of labour is nothing else than a device to institute a reciprocal state of dependency between the sexes." (1969) Domination and oppression are transformed into a seemingly neutral "reciprocal state of dependency". That, of course, is not Rubin's position. For her it is the relations of exchange that have to be transformed. "As long as the relations specify that men exchange women, it is men who are the beneficiaries of the product of such exchanges. . . "(1975, 174)

In contrast to the Levi-Straussian structuralist analysis of exchange, there are two streams in Marxist analysis that have attempted to deal, at the level of production, with the central questions of the nature and importance of the exchange of women, represented by Maurice Godelier (1984) and Claude Meillassoux (1981). Both of these approaches start from the factor of production and production relations.

According to Godelier, kinship, which regulates the exchange of women, also determines access to the means of production and products of labour "regulating rights of groups and individuals." (1984, 14) Kinship relations themselves function not only as superstructure but also as infrastructure. Godelier's analysis has been made with specific reference to forager (hunter-gatherer) tribes. Meillassoux's analysis, formulated with reference to agriculturist communities in what he calls the "domestic mode of production", starts with the distinction between production and reproduction and analyses the exchange of women as an aspect of "reproduction".

A distinction between production and reproduction was first made by Engels, in a much-quoted statement: "According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of the immediate essentials of life. This, again, is of a twofold character. On the one side, the production of the means of existence, of articles of food and clothing, dwellings, and of the tools necessary for that production; on the other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species." (1884, 71)

Starting from this differentiation of the "twofold" character of production and reproduction, Meillassoux argues that in communities that exploit the land as "an instrument of labour", as distinguished from those that exploit it directly as "a subject of labour" (foragers),

> . . . agricultural production, under given circumstances, encourages the formation of permanent and indefinitely renewed social ties, and . . . the circulation of goods between consecutive generations and the solidarity it subsequently creates between them, arouses concerns linked to the *physical and structural reproduction* of the group. When there are such concerns, related to the reproduction of organic relations that connect through time members of the productive group, *women are then sought as child-bearers as much as companions*. (1981, 23, emphases added.)

The concern with "physical and structural reproduction of the group", translates itself into women being sought "as child-bearers as much as companions". From this, though Meillassoux states that the social organization of the domestic agricultural community is built "both upon relations of production" and upon "relations of reproduction", he later equates the two by saying that, "Relations of reproduction must become relations of production". (47) While seeming to start out from a position opposed to Godelier's "kinship as infrastructure" (i.e. relations of production), Meillassoux ends up by similarly equating the two, relations of reproduction and relations of production.

With the key role played by the reproductive potential of women, control of women becomes central to power in these societies. In the subsequent analysis of Peter Aaby, this control of the reproductive potential of women, turns women into the objects of exchange and in this way "reifies" (objectifies) them. That women are the objects of exchange is reflected in the institution of bride-price. Bride-price, by generalizing (i.e. expressing in terms of exchange values) the use value of women, makes possible a generalized exchange of women, one that is not restricted as is the exchange of sisters. In agrarian communities, where land was not scarce, "Only the process of reproduction of labour power seems in general to have had a form which could be monopolized." (Aaby, 1977, 47)

In a critique of Meillassoux's analysis, Olivia Harriss and Kate Young (1981), point out that there are three senses in which the term

"reproduction" has been used: "overall reproduction of a particular social formation; the reproduction of labour itself; and biological reproduction." (113) In order to place these analyses in perspective, it is necessary to start by looking at the meaning of the exchange of women in exogamy. The emphasis in kinship theories, or in the related Meillassoux-Aaby analysis, is on the reproductive potential of women. As Meillassoux puts it, ". . . women are then sought as child-bearers as much as companions." (1981, 23)

Women are certainly sought as child-bearers. But even the child-bearing potential has to be realized through labour. Reproduction is not just a matter of biological capacity. "Human reproduction is never simply a matter of conception and birth," (O'Laughlin quoted in Collier and Yanagisako, 1981, 31) but one involving labour in a number of ways—the labour to produce sustenance for the mother and child, the labour of child rearing, the labour of socialization of the individual, and so on. Separated from this labour, child-bearing capacity has no meaning. Reproduction, even defined as the production of human-beings in general, or labourers in particular, is not something separate from production. Rather, it is a part of the overall, social production. Maria Mies goes further to insist that child-bearing is very much an act of labour, of conscious interaction with nature, rather than an "act *of* nature" (1988, 18, emphasis in original.) There is no ground for separating "reproduction" from "production", where the latter is supposedly a conscious interaction with nature while the former supposedly is not. "Reproduction" is as much an act of labour as is any other kind of production.

The same point has been expressed by Ferruccio Rossi-landi, in the article "On the Dialectic of Exogamic Exchange":

> What each man gives up when he gives up his own blood relations is their use-value. Now the use-value of woman originally lies in the properties, possessed by the female body, of satisfying the man's sexual need and of generating children. These properties, however, cannot be isolated from the ability, acquired by women through acculturation, to carry out services to all the members of the group. From the beginning, in fact, everything has become social: even the 'values of the female body' appear as social variables, so much so that they differ from culture to culture. And it is not enough to generate children, it is also necessary to submit them in turn to the specific processes of socialization required by the group. As grown-up members of the community and objects of exogamic exchange, women themselves are complex social products; the use-values they

> bear come from the specific work with which the community 'produces' them. *What is involved here is the notion of the social production of human beings in general.* (1979, 146, emphasis added.)

What is exchanged in exogamic marriage is not just the "reproductive potential" of women, but their entire use-value. An account of marriage negotiations among the Kharia of Jharkhand, points out: "The father of the boy who only looks for a healthy and strong daughter-in-law to help in the household work, pays close attention to the hands and feet of the girl." (Gallagher, 1931) In this account, the reproductive potential of the woman is taken for granted. Given that, it is the ability of the woman to perform "household" work (which includes both housework and labour in the field and the forest) that is checked.

What is controlled through the reification of women is their entire labour. Reproduction is a part of social production, not something set apart from the latter. The relations of marriage have turned the "reproduction" part of social labour into a "private service" (Engels) for men and, therefore, made it invisible in terms of social labour. The answer to this invisibility does not lie in separating the sphere of "reproduction" from that of "production" but in analysing women's labour, including the universally specific women's labour of "reproduction" as a part of social labour. Separating "reproduction" from "production" and not seeing the two as parts of social labour, only continues the dualism that flows from the sexual division of labour, the creation of the two genders.

An analysis of the development of the oppression of women must move beyond "the split vision of social reality" in order take account of what the historian Joan Kelly had pointed out, ". . . that *woman's place is not a separate sphere or domain of existence but a position within social existence generally*. . . what we see are not two spheres of social reality, but two (or three) sets of social relations." (1984, 56, emphasis in original)

The dichotomies of analysis (Collier and Yanagisako 1987, 38) do, however, have a real basis. They are not figments of the imagination, but reflect, albeit uncritically, the actually existing sphere to which women are confined. The analytic dichotomies reflect the existing subordination domination of what is allotted to women as their sphere. To see these spheres critically is to reveal the social relations underlying them, so as to enable us to move forward in abolishing

them. ". . . once the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then itself be destroyed in theory and in practice." (Marx 1976, 4)

THE FAMILY

Of all institutions in society, the family seems the most permanent and unchanging, the one most resistant to any fundamental change. The family, however, like every other social institution, came into being as the result of certain contradictions in society. And, as with every other social institution, the family will also go out of existence, given certain conditions.

The relative permanence of the manner in which the family has organized a portion of social labour, as a more or less constant factor of the social system, may account for the reason why it virtually disappears in analyses of the contradictions in society. Analyses of the nature and role of the family have played a significant role in examinations of the early period of human history, the period during which the family was actually formed. It once again becomes important in the contemporary period, when the conditions for its dissolution are near at hand. In the long history of society after the formation of classes, the family has had little to do with the contradictions that developed in each form of class society and moved it from one form of such society to another. In fact, even the method in which labour is performed, in other words, the labour process in the family, has undergone relatively little change—that is until the contemporary period.

A similar point is made by Mary O'Brien (1981), with the emphasis not on the labour process in the family, but on the "reproductive process". She argues that the reproductive process has undergone two major changes, the first being the "historical discovery of physiological paternity" and the second, and more recent one, being the "freedom of women to choose parenthood". In the long period between these two changes, the reproductive process has continued basically unchanged, so that "reproductive experience is not differentiated by the division of labour and subsequent class formation, which is the historical form of development of production." (1981, 44) We will return to this analysis of the reproductive process and reproductive experience. For the moment, however, we need to consider two

stages in the formation of the family, stages that are no different from those of the formation of gender and patriarchy. In fact, the process whereby gender and patriarchy are formed is similar to that of the creation of the family.

Salvatore Cucchiari (1981) has hypothesized the existence of a pre-gender horde, with two main categories of people: those who forage (foragers) and those who tend children (child tenders). According to him, though activity and space were divided, people were not divided into exclusive groups. "Roles and statuses are not prescriptive or permanent and tend to be shared by everyone." (1981,43) He denies the rigid "man the hunter" and "woman the gatherer" division of labour imputed to foragers, pointing out that this would only operate in a situation where women had exclusive responsibility for childcare, which is just the relation that has to be explained. He also points out that as against the assumption that each woman is responsible for the care of her own child, childcare could be a communal responsibility, with men also taking part. With such communal childcare, there is no reason why the categories of forager and child tender should be permanent and ascriptive.

Why is there a change from this non-ascriptive and non-permanent division of labour to the formation of rigid gender categories? According to Cucchiari, it is "the contradiction between unitarian ideology, with its insistence on sharing one life experience, and the biological asymmetry or exclusivity of proto-women's ability to have and suckle children." (1981, 50) This contradiction dissolves the flexible division of labour and leads to the formation of the rigid gender categories of men and women. Without necessarily accepting Cucchiari's explanation of the change, one can agree that there must have been some change in the processes of labour, including reproductive labour, which made the institution of gender both necessary and possible. With this division of labour, man's role as parent is negated not, as Mary O'Brien argues, in the alienation of male seed in the act of procreation, but in man's withdrawal from childcare. Although the woman's role may not, in fact, be confined to the household, yet her specific identification is with the domestic sphere, with the labour of reproduction. This defines her as gender.

Along with a division of labour, an exchange is also instituted. Women's labour in childcare, reproductive labour in general, is exchanged for men's labour in the outer sphere, whether of production or of higher ritual. Gender also creates the two spaces, inner and

outer.

This process simultaneously created the family, unifying the two distinct genders of men and women. As we have mentioned before, such a unification, dependent on a division of labour, does not mean that the two unified parts had an equal status or position within the unified whole, the family. Suppression or domination have any meaning only if they are necessary for exploitation. There is exchange of labour within the family, but that does not mean that equal amounts of labour are exchanged. Exchange not only does not rule out exploitation, it can also be the vehicle for exploitation.

The family in its origin institutes the domination of one gender over the other, of men over women. But this domination becomes complete when the family further develops and, as it has been put, men become masters of the private domain too. The reasons for this development have been differently expressed. According to Engels, it was the necessity of being able to pass on private property to "one's own" children, i.e. of supposedly definite paternity, that made men take charge of the private domain too. According to Mary O'Brien, it is the "historical discovery of physiological paternity" that triggered off the change: "It is as lord of the private realm that man gives substance to the right of paternal appropriation as a proprietary right". (1981, 56)

Engels's analysis points to a change in the sphere of production having an effect on the sphere of reproduction—the rise of private property in the sphere of production necessitating the control of children, meaning women's labour of producing and raising children, in the household sphere of reproduction. A link is thus shown between the two spheres of production and reproduction, of private and public. Mary O'Brien's analysis, on the other hand, looks at the sphere of reproduction as something by itself, not in interaction with the sphere of production, rather as one that has its own dialectic. While each sphere of social existence does have its own internal contradiction, can that be the determinant of its manner of development?

Here Mao Zedong's analysis of the role of internal and external contradictions in development can be of help, ". . . external causes are the condition of change and internal causes are the basis of change, and that external causes become operative through internal causes."(1967, 314) While the manner in which a particular contradiction is resolved depends on the internal contradiction of that

object, the condition or occasion of that development may well be an external factor. In this case, the external factor of the development of private property may provide the occasion (moment, if you will) for the establishment of men's control over the private sphere too, but the manner in which this control is effected, will depend on the internal contradictions of the sphere of reproduction.

Would it, however, suffice to accept an aspect of cognition, the "discovery of physiological paternity" as the factor leading to the establishment of patriarchy? Ideas can certainly become a material force in history. But a theory of this sort lends itself to a psychoanalytic theory of social history—of "womb envy" as the basic factor impelling men to compensate their inability to bear children by seeking to control the fruits of the reproductive process, i.e. children. Rather, the reasons why men are impelled to seek to control the sphere of reproduction must be found, if we are to be able to understand the creation of patriarchy.

A contributor to a volume in honour of Mary O'Brien expressed her theory at its logical limits:

> culture, the regulation of marriage and kinship by men by means of women, is an artificial principle of species continuity which men have instituted to mediate the genetic continuity which escapes them. It is not so much an expression of "man's" need to overcome scarcity or an alienation resulting from productive relations (the division of labour between the sexes in marriage, for example) as an expression of men's gender-specific need to overcome their alienation from temporal and species continuity as a result of their primary exclusion from the *reproductive process* . . . (emphasis in original, Finn, 1989, 26)

Cognition of men's exclusion from the reproductive process would be, if anything, stronger in the period before the discovery of physiological paternity, than after this discovery. The archaeological record also shows that the celebration of women's reproductive capacity is much more pronounced in the early period, before the domestication of animals. "Womb envy" would, as a result, be stronger in the period before the discovery of physiolgical paternity, so too, one should expect the need to institute "an artificial principle of species continuity" to be stronger. In history the reverse is true, and it is after the discovery of physiological paternity that the family as a principle of species continuity is instituted. As pointed out earlier, contra Mary

O'Brien, it is not at the point of copulation that men are alienated from parenthood, but at the point where men are excluded (exclude themselves) from the labour of childcare.

It is our understanding that it is necessary to study the various spheres of social existence not only in their own internal contradictions, but also in their inter-relations. Further, in studying each sphere and its inter-relations, it is the particular labour processes and relations of production involved that have to be given prime importance. Of course, labour processes are involved not in production alone, but equally in reproduction. Why the latter have been relatively constant, while the dynamic part of human society has been labour processes in production, is itself something that needs explanation.

THE CREATION OF PATRIARCHY

The creation of patriarchy was the outcome of a long historical process which, according to Gerda Lerner, took nearly 2500 years for its completion. (1986, 212) Archaeological and anthropological analyses of numerous pre-state societies show variations in the degree and extent to which different forms of male domination exist in these societies. While patriarchy was the creation of a long historical process, there were definitely some bench-marks that marked large changes in the ongoing processes. We have identified one such bench-mark in the division of labour that established the two genders of men and women; and another in the (full) development of private property and the state, which established the full control of men over women, designated as patriarchy.

Two important questions arise about this long historical period of the creation of patriarchy. The first is about the kind of female labour that is controlled in the process of creating labour. The analyses put forward have been based on two views in this matter. Gerda Lerner, following Meillasoux and Aaby, identifies women's reproductive labour as being the first labour to be appropriated: "Thus, the first appropriation of private property consists of the appropriation of the labour of women as *reproducers*." (emphasis in original, 1986, 52)

As distinct from this analysis, the contributors to the volume *Women's Work, Men's Property* (edited by Stephanie Coontz and Peta Henderson, 1986) seek the origins of sexual stratification in "women's role in production, and not in her powers of reproduction. Women

indisputably played a central productive role in early foraging and horticultural communities, and the authors suggest that the origins of male dominance were bound up with the struggle to control women's labour and products." They further say, "Control of women's reproductive powers followed from this. There was no demographic reason, dissociated from this social one, for men to oppress women simply because they bear children." (1986, 35). From our analysis of the situation of women in the various Jharkhand tribes, we would conclude that the origins of male dominance are connected with the struggle to control women's labour and the products of women's labour, not necessarily the labour of reproduction, but women's labour as a whole. In the Indian debate on the question, a position similar to ours has been taken by Gail Omvedt. (1984)

The other question that arises relates to the nature of the social formation(s) in the period prior to the full-fledged class societies of private property. Gerda Lerner does not deal with this question, since her concern is to demonstrate the nature of the historical changes that immediately preceded and accompanied the formation of class society. The authors of the Coontz and Henderson volume deal, however, with just this question. They "reject analyses which move directly from communal societies to advanced class systems based on individual private property without identifying an intervening social formation or mode of production." The authors differ on the nature of the intervening formations, but agree that forms of communal and kin property preceded class society. It is then necessary to analyse the role of women in these formations and the nature of the accumulation (if any) that took place.

That the subordination of women preceded the formation of class society, in the conventional sense, has by now been quite well established in the anthropological material on women in various kinds of tribes. That there were many changes in the position of women in these tribes, ranging from foraging hordes to agriculturist village communities, is also quite well established. What is needed is to relate these changes to the process of the creation of patriarchy and of private property.

In Jharkhand, we can observe many forms of property that can be said to lie between community property and the individual property of the male head of the household. In the foraging situation, access to productive resources (the forest), is that of the whole band. Membership of a band, which may be temporary, determines access

to such resources. Income, however, is that of the individual family. Within the family, there is no notion of the income of the (male) head of the household. In fact, as seen in the Birhor, since the women do the major marketing, they basically control the use of income. There is no accumulation of any substance. While patrilocality is the norm, matrilocality does not carry any disadvantages. There is little notion of male control of female sexuality, infertility itself is not such a problem and there is no notion of perpetuating the lineage.

With land becoming the main productive resource, one which is itself produced, there are definite rules of access based on kinship and lineage. We have not been able to analyse the position in shifting agriculture, where rules of access to individual plots are quite different from that in settled agriculture and there is initially no handing down of plots within the family, from one generation to another.

In settled agriculture, community access to land is combined with allotment to individual families, essentially to the male head of the household. Whatever accumulation takes place, basically in the form of land, is in the male line. Patrilocality ensures that in this form of partly communal property, women are the first historic category of non-owning workers, a position that is somewhat mitigated by their continuing to have definite life-interest rights in land and, even more, by the continued importance of income from gathering, with rules of accrual and control that do not make a distinction between worker and owner.

In jural and other terms too women are not full members of the community. Notions of the "purity of women" are attached to the exclusiveness of the tribe—something that is transformed to a central notion in caste society, where it is associated with caste status (Uma Chakravarti 1990). The fertility of women is important, connected with the growing importance of "perpetuating" the lineage, in order to be able to pass on the results of accumulation, viz. land.

With the development of senior and junior lineages, based on the notion of "original settlers of the land", men of junior lineages also come to have restricted ownership rights in land and begin paying a tribute to the "original settlers" and to the chiefs. These junior lineages are relatives on the female side. Matrilocality, in this form of property, has definite disadvantages, unlike in the forager bands.

The final stage in the dissolution of communal property is that of individual ownership of land, with no mediation of and control by the community. It is in this position (reached by some tribes like the

Kherwar in Jharkhand) that women are reduced to full non-owning workers, with no usufructuary rights (life-interest) in land and with even the income from gathering accruing to the male head of the household, in the manner prescribed by Manu for caste society: "Manu declares that the wife, the son and the slave—these are unpropertied, whatever they earn is the property of those to whom they belong." (Sharma, 1983, 42)

It is with this full establishment of individual property, which becomes in effect the property of the male head of the household that women cease to have any relative autonomy in their "own" spheres of activity: not only is there a strict sexual division of labour, but the entire fruits of the family's labour are for the male head to dispose of as he likes, male control of women's person extends to both fertility and sexuality, women lack autonomy in consumption and mobility, and regular male violence against women to keep them "under control" is legitimized. (See Uma Chakravarti 1990, for a discussion of ancient codes which legitimize and "regulate" punishments by male kinsmen in inculcating "modest behaviour" on the part of women.)

In subsequent chapters we will try to look at the changes in the position of women among the adivasis (tribes) of Jharkhand in the light of the analyses set out above. Conversely, we will also look at these and other questions mentioned above in the light of developments among the adivasis of Jharkhand. Now, we proceed to a brief account of the region and the people.

2

Jharkhand

This is a study of adivasi (tribal) women in Jharkhand. Jharkhand does not exist as a political entity recognized by the Indian state, but there is a movement in this region (now split up between Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh) for a separate Jharkhand state. The Jharkhand region is mainly in the Chotanagpur plateau, with an extension into the plains and low hills of Santhal Parganas. To the rulers of Delhi and the states into which it is divided, Jharkhand is important for its forest, river and mineral resources and, of course, as a source of cheap labour.

The adivasis of Jharkhand are divided into two main linguistic groups. One is of those tribes that speak the languages of the Austro-Asiatic or Mundari group—this includes Santhal, Ho and Munda. The other is of tribes that speak a language of the Dravidian group—this includes Oraon and Chero.

The adivasis (a term that originated in Jharkhand, and means "original inhabitants" or indigenous people) are now less than 30 per cent of the population in this area. It is not certain when, if ever, they constituted a majority of the population. For the past few hundred years the adivasis of this area have lived in a symbiotic relationship with various artisan and service castes, referred to as *sadans,* who now constitute upto 50 per cent of the population. In the many revolts in the area, the *sadans* too participated in large numbers. Though these *sadans* are often of the same castes as are found in the adjoining plains, yet there is little contact between Jharkhandi castes and their corresponding castes outside. Marriage, which is a very good indicator of the existence of social relations, is, even for these castes, confined to Jharkhandi circles.

The symbiotic relation between the adivasis and *sadans* has resulted in the creation of a composite culture and a common world-outlook. This composite culture and world-outlook of Jharkhand, with its adivasi core, is somewhat different from the adjoining cultures

of the plains. The *sarna dharma,* a set of animist religious beliefs with a naturalistic basis, has become fused with the religions that have come in from the plains, whether Hinduism, Islam or Christianity. Adivasis and *sadans* alike partake of both sets of religious doctrines and practices. Song and dance (in theme, melody and rhythm) are more or less common to the various tribes and to the *sadans*. In fact, though the effect of both Hinduism and Christianity has been to look down upon community dancing, the resurgence of the Jharkhand movement has influenced a return to community dancing.

Summing up a world-outlook is not an easy matter. But there are some features of the Jharkhandi cosmology, if one may call it that, which set it apart from the cosmology of caste society in the plains. The Jharkhand Coordination Committee (JCC)—an umbrella organization of various, though not all, organizations fighting for a Jharkhand state—has summed up what it considers the marks of "cultural identity" that set Jharkhand apart from the surrounding plains.(1989) Elements of Jharkhandi identity are said to be, for instance, harmony with nature; equality in society, including a relatively equal position for women; and collectivism in economic activities. These values are being eroded by those of disharmony with nature, stratification in society, greater control over women and individualism in economic activities.

We will not, at this stage, discuss to what extent these characterizations are valid; these features will, however, be discussed in varying detail later in this work. Here we will merely point out that there are differences in relation to nature, women, and collectivism in Jharkhandi society, particularly among the adivasis, as compared to the caste society of the plains.

With regard to women, Jharkhandis, including women themselves, point out that women in tribal society do not have as low a status as women in plains Hindu society. Both in the family and in society, adivasi women certainly have a more prominent position than do women in developed class society in the plains. But this relatively superior position should not blind one either to its rapid erosion, or the "traditional" inequalities.

There are two crucial areas of inequality—property rights and political participation. In all the Jharkhand tribes property, particularly land, passes through the male line. The society is both patrilineal and patrilocal. Further, women perform a major share of the total social labour. The result of their labour is accumulation in male hands.

The other important inequality is that of political participation. The traditional village assembly (*panchayat*) is virtually an all-male institution. Membership is of the male head of the household or someone else in his stead. It is only in the rare circumstance that there is no suitable male in the household that a woman may be a member of the *panchayat*.

Questions about property (land) rights of women and women's political participation have figured in both conferences of the Jharkhand Mahila Mukti Samiti (Jharkhand Women's Liberation Committee). Leading women cadres in the Jharkhand movement have also written about them. These matters will be discussed in further detail in subsequent chapters. Given that there is a shared Jharkhandi world-outlook, which is different from that of caste society in the plains, can one say that there is a material base for this?

In the first place, the movement towards settled, plough agriculture is much more recent than it was in the plains. This movement is continuing even today—the Kharia only settled down in this century, while the Korwa and many others are still in the process of settling down. Sections of the Korwa and the Birhor as a whole are not agriculturists of any kind, but foragers.

Second, besides the regularly-cultivated lowlands, some amount of upland is also cultivated. The uplands, however, are not cultivated regularly. A modified slash-and-burn agriculture is carried on in these uplands—the land is cultivated every three or four years and jungle allowed to grow in between.

Third, even where the adivasis have long ago taken to settled agriculture (as is the case with the Santhal, Munda, Oraon and others) they nevertheless retain a considerable element of gathering (as opposed to production) of forest produce in their economic life. Where deforestation has taken place, migration for low-paid wage labour has replaced collection and sale of forest produce as a necessary supplement to the agricultural income. In areas where forests still exist forest produce yields at least half the income of a village. Further, the *sadans*, who (except for traders like *telis* or some former zamindari intermediaries) are generally worse off economically than the adivasis, depend even more than the latter on collection and sale of forest produce. Consequently, the Jharkhand area as a whole is characterized by the combination of gathering and agriculture in its economic activities.

A fourth, and central, factor is that of communal property forma-

tions. These exist in both foraging and agriculturist tribes, of course, in various stages of disintegration. It is this existence of some form of communal access to forest and land that enables us to use the term "tribe" to denote both forager bands and agriculturist communities. The processes of labour and the forces of production may be different in the two cases, but in both there is a communal access to productive resources, one that is in various stages of disintegration.

A fifth factor in the shared Jharkhandi experience is the weakness of the process of endogenous state formation. The Chero and Nagbanshi kingdoms that did develop were more in the nature of pre-state formations, lacking as they did a standing army. K.S.Singh (1987) points out that this state formation too was more a feature of the Dravidian tribes (Chero and Nagbanshi), where the land of the chiefs had been made into private property; and not of the Mundari tribes (Santhal, Munda, Ho), where land continued to remain the property of the clan. Among the Mundari tribes there developed only dominant lineages and not a kingdom.

The lack or weakness of endogenous state formation meant that the state machinery has remained alien to Jharkhandi society. When the British, for the first time, established an administrative machinery over the area, the intermediaries they had to use, whether traders, landlords, moneylenders, administrators, or lowly-clerks and policemen, were largely from outside—leading to the identification of *diku* (meaning outsider) with exploiter. The weakness of endogenous state formation also meant that the armed people remained armed—a condition reinforced by the continuing forest economy. The weakness we have spoken of is not a factor of production. But it has certainly had its influence on the culture and psychological make-up of the Jharkhandis.

Indian mainstream anthropology has followed one of two approaches to tribes. The first, typified by Verrier Elwin, (1960) saw them as some kind of noble savages, who should be isolated in the manner of a "National Park", so as to preserve them in a state of pristine purity by insulating them from society. G.S.Ghurye, (1963) on the other hand, refused to accord any special status to the tribals and saw them merely as "backward Hindus".

The historical process has been to assimilate the tribes into feudal, and later also bourgeois society. In bourgeois, industrial society they have been taken in at the bottom rung of the working class. The rank (caste) into which they have been assimilated in feudal, agrarian

society has usually, as Irfan Habib (1985) points out, been related to their status as agriculturists or food gatherers. The food gatherers have become the menial castes and agricultural labourers, untouchable dalits. The agriculturist tribes have become middle, peasant castes. A few from the ruling lineages or clans, like Nagbanshis of Jharkhand, have been admitted into a sort of Kshatriya status. Certain tribes, like the Ahoms of Assam and Jats of Punjab, have themselves been central to the formation of the corresponding nationalities. More recently, the Naga and Mizo tribes have evolved into distinct nations.

Imperialism distorted the process of nation building by, among other things, often setting up arbitrary provincial boundaries. The tribes were the worst sufferers in this respect, as they were divided up among various states. Further, imperialism introduced wage labour and other cash relations. In these the Jharkhandis were accorded the position of "drawers of water and hewers of wood". Whether as providers of forest products or as suppliers of labour power—they came at the bottom of the scale—coolie labour, first, for the tea plantations and then for the coal mines, and so on. This status of the Jharkhandis has not changed to this day.

The absence of a recognized and mature national identity helps maintain this low status, low even within the working class and other producing classes. National oppression and discrimination add to and intensify class exploitation. National oppression deprives the workers of dignity and weakens them in the fight against the extremes of exploitation to which they are subject. What imperialism and the Indian ruling classes want is that the Jharkhandis become a "coolie nation", so that they can be easily suppressed as the lowest-paid workers and producers. This coolie status is evident not only among the expatriate Jharkhandis in the tea-gardens of Assam and Bengal (the earnings of these permanent workers, who were initially brought there as indentured labourers, are the lowest of all among workers in large-scale enterprise, lower even than those of contract workers in many other industries) but also in the Jharkhandis' own homeland. The link between extreme class exploitation and national oppression was revealed in the mid-seventies wave of struggle in the Dhanbad coal mines. Indeed, it was only the combination of the trade union struggle with that of national assertion that brought some benefits to the lowest of the coal miners.

The overexploitation of Jharkhandi workers is itself bound up with the depressed condition of the other major (rather, *the* major) class in

Jharkhand, i.e.the peasants. As mentioned earlier, the peasantry is a full fledged peasantry only in a few places and otherwise combines gathering of forest produce with agriculture. The *seth-mahajan*-(trader-moneylender) bureaucrat combine sucks the life-blood out of these producers. Deforestation deprives them of their old world, and pushes them to the margins in the new world.

Land has been closely associated with the political struggle in Jharkhand. The connection existed not only in the nineteenth century uprisings, but has continued to the present day. The Naxalite uprising of 1969-70 in Debra-Gopiballavpur, spilling over into Baharagora and other adjoining areas of the Bengal-Bihar-Orissa border region, has become part of the folklore of the region. In the mid-seventies, outside Dhanbad, the spread of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha was closely linked to the militant mass movement for the recovery of land and other assets seized by the moneylenders.

Forest issues have not got the same prominence as land. But it should be remembered that the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, enacted after the uprising led by Birsa Munda at the turn of the century, recognized not only the community right to land but also, in some places, the community right to forests. These *khuntkatti* forests still remain under community and not government ownership. In the mid-fifties Palamu witnessed a movement for "jungle raj" led by the Kherwars, under Fetal Singh. In the seventies and eighties opposition to deforestation, the monoculture of eucalyptus etc., have appeared on the agenda. Surprisingly, the question of higher prices for forest produce has not had the attention one would expect, seeing the importance of earnings from sale of forest produce. The reasons for this require analysis.

The problem of deforestation has merged into another problem—the typically modern one of displacement due to dams, mines, factories, cantonments and so on. In a particularly cruel irony, the number of dams in Jharkhand has been increasing, while the proportion of land irrigated has been declining. This decline is mainly due to the decay of community institutions and the consequent destruction of traditional, village-based irrigation. (See Nirmal Sengupta for an analysis of this problem.) The sudden loss of the conditions of labour (land and forest) has turned hundreds of thousands of Jharkhandis into destitutes, reduced to selling their labour power for a pittance.

The struggles of the Jharkhandi people against the loss of the very

conditions of their existence, against their being the lowest-paid, coolie labour, are usually portrayed as an opposition to "national development" and a result of "tribalism". In a rare departure from such a portrayal, an intellectual of the CPI(M), the ruling party in West Bengal, and one that is staunchly opposed to Jharkhand, writes:

> Today, it is a curious fact that the people of the region agitate against the construction of major irrigation projects or the setting up of big industries. For them, even the construction of a road means, primarily, opening the area to the *dikus* and the police, i.e., to exploitation and terror. Historically viewed, developmental activities have meant land alienation and pauperization for the people of Jharkhand. Their opposition is not the misguided opposition of primitives to national development, as it is prone to be portrayed. (Javed Alam, 1990)

Behind the usual portrayal of the Jharkhandis' struggle as that of "primitives" opposed to "national development", lies a particular view of history and development, as the prerogative of capitalism, of both imperialist and comprador varieties. It was capitalism that slaughtered the "Red Indians" of North America and exterminated other indigenous peoples all over the world. Comprador capitalism in the former colonies continues more or less the same policy, thinking it its mission to bring the "primitive tribes" into the "mainstream of civilization". This is the policy of the ruling classes and the state in Delhi. It is also the policy of the provincial governments, who have denied the tribal and semi-tribal people language and other rights. It is a policy, as we have mentioned above, carried out by the "Marxist" government in West Bengal. Needless to say, such a policy of "development" (i.e. of expanding capitalism) is often justified with quotations from Marx and Engels.

Before proceeding, we should briefly consider some relevant aspects of the Marx-Engels analysis of the national question, in particular their notion of "ahistoric nations".

AHISTORIC NATIONS ?

In using the work of Marx and Engels on the national question, there are two discernible trends. Those who wish to support a particular national movement use quotations from their writings on the Irish question, more so the later writings on Ireland. Those who wish to

oppose a particular national movement support their case with quotations from some of the earlier writings, particularly those on the Slavs in 1848.

Besides such "uses" of the writings of Marx and Engels, those trying to deal with the legacy in a comprehensive fashion also face the problem of reconciling these various writings. H.B.Davis (1978) is clearly uncomfortable with the earlier writings and tries to ascribe the views contained in them to Engels rather than Marx. The editors of the *Collected Works of Marx and Engels* point out, "History has not confirmed Engels' opinion that the small Slav peoples of Central Europe were doomed to be absorbed and assimilated by their larger and more highly civilized neighbours." (1977, xxv) The reason for this wrong opinion is explained as follows: "The tendency towards political centralization which resulted from the development of capitalism and caused the small peoples to lose their national independence, concealed from Engels another tendency which was not sufficiently manifest at that time, namely, the sharpening of the oppressed people's struggle for independence, for setting up their own states."

Was this analysis, proved wrong by subsequent events, due only to the insufficient development of the struggles of these oppressed nations for their own states? The point is that the attempts of these peoples to set up their own states were opposed; indeed they (the peoples) were deemed to be incapable of doing this. The struggles of the oppressed nations were not judged on their own basis, i.e. as a struggle against a form of oppression, but on their relation to the overall struggle of forces in Europe at the time. It was for this reason that Marx and Engels, from the beginning, supported the Polish struggle, since it was aimed at that citadel of European reaction, Czarist Russia, while they opposed the struggles of the Slavs, supported as they were by the reactionary Hapsburg monarchy.

It is only in the light of Marx and Engels' analysis of the course of European history and,in fact, their analysis of the nature of human evolution that their varying approaches to different national struggles can be understood. Their support in some cases, and opposition in others, is consistent with their world-view at that time. Ronaldo Munck's *The Difficult Dialogue—Marxism and the National Question* (1986), unlike some of the earlier treatments of the subject, attempts to squarely face the problems posed by Marx and Engels' analysis of the national question.

The reason for dealing with this concept of "ahistoric nations" and

the framework within which it is used, is that this concept and framework are both still operative within some Marxist discussions on the national question in India. In one way or another, these are used to deny the validity of numerous struggles against national oppression and, what is actually the same thing, to justify the different forms of national oppression on which the Indian state is founded. An example of this is S.G.Sardesai's rhetorical question, "Can little Sikkim, left to itself, be anything but a tiny country, languishing in feudal backwardness with the superimposition of the imperialist American bully ?" (1987)

In the revolutionary upheavals of 1848, Marx and Engels characterized the "great historic nations" of Germany, Italy, Hungary and Poland, as having gained, *through their struggles*, the right to form national states. These dynamic nations were contrasted with those which were supposedly "non-historic" and not deserving of working-class support.

Engels wrote "These relics of a nation mercilessly trampled underfoot in the course of history, as Hegel says, these *residual fragments of peoples* always become fanatical standard-bearers of counter-revolution and remain so until their complete extirpation or loss of their general character, just as their whole existence in general is itself a protest against a great historical revolution." (1849a, 234) Engels, once again characterized the Southern Slavs—the Czechs, Slovaks, Serbs and Croats—as "Peoples which have never had a history of their own, which from the time when they achieved the first, most elementary stage of civilization already came under foreign sway, or which were *forced* to attain the first stage of civilization only by means of a foreign yoke, are not viable and will never be able to achieve any kind of political independence." (1849b, 367)

Marx wrote in a similar vein about India, "Indian society has no history at all, at least no known history. What we call its history, is but the history of the successive intruders who founded their empires on the passive basis of that unresisting and unchanging society. *The question, therefore, is not whether the English had a right to conquer India, but whether we are to prefer India conquered by the Turk, the Persian, by the Russian, to India conquered by the Briton.*" (Emphasis added, 1853, 82)

There is more than one factor in the notion of "ahistoric" nations in these writings. One, as stated with reference to India, is that of an "unchanging" society; the other is that of a society which from the

beginning has been under a foreign yoke.

The idea of any society being "unchanging" must mean that there are no contradictions in that society impelling it to new directions. This is an impossibility. The very creation of human society itself is the result of the working out of various contradictions. There is a whole history prior to the formation of class society, a history that includes what Engels was to later call the "first class struggle"—the struggle between men and women.

It is only in a condition of a society which possesses no contradictions to impel it to move, that the second factor, of always having been under a foreign yoke, can be operative. A society with no contradictions at all is the only one that could be "unresisting", and thus, from the beginning, under a foreign yoke. The essential factor in the notion of "ahistoric" nations is that of a society with no internal contradictions, with no factors for change and no factors for resistance. The notion of nations which had no history, and which past then becomes the ground for denying these nations a future, must then be rejected as being inconsistent with the general analysis of society and history as being founded on contradictions.

Here it must be pointed out that Marx and Engels did learn from the history actually being made by the various peoples, including those supposedly without a history. They supported the Prague uprising of the Czechs in 1848 and refuted "...the insinuations of the German newspapers which alleged that the Czech party served reaction, the aristocracy, the Russians, etc." (1848a, 119) They, of course, hailed the Indian uprising of 1857. The making of history by these peoples who supposedly had no history, led Marx and Engels to support the future of these nations. As Engels wrote with reference to the Slavs, "A single courageous attempt at democratic revolution, even if it were crushed, extinguishes in the memory of the people, whole centuries of infamy and cowardice, and at once rehabilitates a nation, however deeply it has been despised." (1849b, 373)

The second ground on which Marx and Engels opposed some of the national struggles was that they were connected to the centres of European reaction and not to the rising, revolutionary bourgeoisie. Allied to this was support for large states, with centralization of economic and political powers as being essential for world progress. Engels wrote, "Now, however, as a result of the powerful progress of industry, trade and communications, political centralisation has become a much more urgent need than it was then, in the fifteenth

and sixteenth centuries." (1849b, 371)

This was then extended to a right of the rising bourgeoisies to carry out conquests. As Engels noted about the situation in America:

> That the energetic Yankees by rapid exploitation of the Californian gold mines will increase the means of circulation, in a few years will concentrate a dense population at the most suitable places on the coast of the Pacific Ocean, create large cities, open up communication by steamship, construct a railway from New York to San Francisco, for the time really open up the Pacific Ocean to civilisation, and for the third time in history give world traffic a new direction? The "independence" of a few Spanish Californians and Texans may suffer because of it, in some places 'justice' and other moral principles may be violated; but what does that matter compared to such facts of world-historic importance ? (1849b, 365-66)

> What was the justification for the right of conquest by the expanding bourgeoisie ? By the same right under which France took Flanders, Lorraine and Alsace, and will sooner or later take Belgium—by that same right Germany takes over Schleswig; *it is the right of civilisation as against barbarism, of progress as against stability*. Even if the agreements were in Denmark's favour—which is very doubtful—this right carries more weight than all the agreements, for it is *the right of historical evolution*. (Engels, emphases added, 1848b 423)

This is a notion of history not as a result of concrete processes, but as itself the creator of those processes. It is history as the creator that can have a "right of historical evolution". The right of the bourgeoisie is transformed, in this manner, into the right of historical evolution. Put in this way, the Hegelian-origin of this analysis becomes clear. Munck quotes Hegel from *The Philosophy of Right* to reveal the origins of this analysis, "The same consideration [right of "heroes" to form nations] justifies civilized nations in regarding and treating as barbarians those who lag behind them in institutions which are the essential moments of the state." And from that, "The civilized nation is conscious that the rights of barbarians are unequal to its own and treats their autonomy as only a formality." (Munck, 1986, 163)

The law of historical evolution was the notion that the bourgeois path of development was the only progressive path, which would have to be traversed by all societies in their development. Allied to this was the idea that some societies, the "ahistorical" nations, were incapable of producing bourgeoisies, thus had no future other than as subject nations, doomed to be swallowed up by bourgeois nations.

The framework of a law of historical evolution, with the bourgeosie as the necessary standard-bearer of progress in a particular phase of history, until the working class is able to take over, allied with the notions of "ahistorical" nations which cannot produce bourgeoisies—this analysis shows that the differing stands of Marx and Engels on national struggles, supporting some and opposing others, were not aberrations; rather, both these positions derived from a view of history that was linear. It was a view of history in which, as Marx wrote in *Capital,* "The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future". (1867, 8-9)

Involvement with the Irish question and analysis of India led Marx to reject the earlier analysis of the progressive role of the bourgeoisie in relation to these colonial countries. Rather than industrializing Ireland, Britain had "destroyed all industrial life in Ireland." Rather than embodying the right of civilization over barbarism, colonialism was now seen as a brake on the progress of the colony.

In a famous intervention in the debate on the possible road for the Russian revolution, Marx explicitly rejected the thesis that Russia, like Western Europe, had to necessarily pass through the capitalist phase and only after that would be able to advance to socialism. He condemned those who ". . . metamorphose my historical sketch into an historico-philosophical theory of the general path which every people is fated to tread, whatever the historical circumstances in which it finds itself. . . " (quoted in Munck, 1986, 19) Marx held that the Russian commune could be a regenerative force without having to be first destroyed by capitalism.

The notion of "ahistoric" nations can only stand in a linear framework of historical evolution. It did not help Marx and Engels in evaluating the various national movements around 1848. Only after learning from the Irish, Indian and other anti-colonial movements and, subsequently, from the experience of the ancient Russian commune, could Marx and Engels reject their earlier linear framework. It is this linear evolution theory, the "historico-philosophical theory of the general path which every people is fated to tread", that must be rejected in order to appreciate the struggle of an "ahistoric" nation like Jharkhand; or to oppose Indian expansionism which today arrogates to itself the banner of "democracy" for all of South Asia.

3

The Foraging Band

The area that we are dealing with, Jharkhand, has a combination of a variety of tribes and occupational artisan castes. The tribes themselves range from almost pure hunter-gatherers (foragers) like the Birhor of Hazaribagh, to the settled agriculturist tribes, like the Santhal and Munda. But it is a feature of the agriculturist tribes that none of them depends solely on agriculture, whether of the plough or of a slash-and-burn variety. Along with agriculture, all of them do a considerable amount of gathering. Thus, the tribes are not pure agriculturist tribes; they are agriculturist-cum-gatherers.

Foraging and agriculture involve different processes of labour. Labour is a process involving both human beings and nature, which results in an exchange between human beings and nature. The relation between human beings and nature varies with the process of production. Nature, or land as it is referred to, is "the universal subject of human labour". (Marx, *Capital, I,* 178) In that production where things are taken from the land, as in foraging, land is the subject of labour. In foraging, land is not produced by labour but is taken as given; in agriculture the labour process changes. "The earth itself is an instrument of labour. . . " (Marx, *Capital, I,* 179) The land is not taken as it is, as it exists in nature. But it is itself produced, as it were, by labour.

Meillassoux (1981) discusses the different meanings of the two labour processes, one where land is the subject of labour and the other where it is an instrument of labour. In the first case the returns are instant, but "not necessarily immediate because production requires the use of mediating instruments and tools. . . (14). There is cooperation in labour at least for security in gathering and for some forms of hunting. But the sharing of the produce ends the process. From the point of view of production there is no reason for the groups to reform ". . . nothing demands that the same producers work together in the same group in the future".(15) There is not that

characteristically agricultural cycle, joining the producers of one cycle with those of the next. The looseness of band organization in foraging societies (Lee and Devore, 1968) is possible because of the looseness of production cooperation.

The distinction between the two forms of economic systems is characterized in almost equivalent terms by Woodburn (1980): "those in which the return for labour (yield for labour) is delayed and those in which it is, in general, immediate." Woodburn, however, clarifies that, according to him, "both economic systems based on delayed return and systems based on immediate return are common among hunting and gathering societies, but only delayed-return systems occur among farmers." (1980, 98)

Before going on we should point out that, while it is not necessary for the individuals grouped together in some forms of joint production, like hunting, to reform in the same groups, yet there is one form of grouping, of cooperation, that is not only pervasive but also quasi-permanent. This is the cooperation of labour in the family, the nature of which we will analyse later.

The transformation of labour into energy (labour power) takes place in a short cycle, there is little of the waiting characteristic of agriculture. The time spent on production is relatively brief—just about four hours a day. (Lee and Devore, 1968) But, contrary to Sahlins's notion of "The Original Affluent Society" (1972), the relatively large amount of leisure cannot be taken as an indicator of "affluence". In the first place, the products of foraging (roots, fruits, vegetables, meat) are such that they cannot be accumulated. Second, recent studies have shown that these societies may be deficient in carbohydrates. (Myers, 1988) Further, "the technological impossibility of circumventing the water constraint," (Godelier, 1986, 40) also results in enforced leisure. Marjorie Shostak (1990) also refers to studies which have indicated that many !Kung lose weight in the dry season and then regain it after the season is over. This would mean that leisure is also in part and for some time, at least, enforced by the lack of energy.

THE BIRHOR

The Birhor are a small tribe in Jharkhand, partly in the Bengal-Bihar-Orissa trijunction and partly in Hazaribagh district. The tribe was

studied by S.C.Roy in 1925, but here we shall rely mainly on the accounts given by Jyoti Sen (1966) and A.K.Adhikary (1978). The Birhor are hunter-gatherers (foragers). They hunt small game, gather roots and tubers, collect honey, etc. They specialize in the making of ropes from chop fibre. The rope and some other products, such as live monkeys, are either bartered in the neighbouring villages for rice and other foodgrains, or sold for cash.

These activities are more or less the same as those mentioned in nineteenth century accounts (e.g. Dalton, 1960). The Birhor have remained determined foragers and Dalton mentions that the Birhor ". . . never touch a plough. A man with his family who not long ago left their community and took to cultivating in the plains, is now considered outcaste." (1960, 217)

The Birhor change residence. Members of a settlement form a community linked by common residence. Not only does residence change, but the composition of a community does so also. Some household units leave while new ones join in the course of movement. (See also N. Prasad, 1961, 223) This conforms to the now commonly-known pattern of band adhesion. With no anteriority and posteriority in the production process, such temporary relations are no problem. Membership in a band is not restricted, as in the case of agrarian communities, to those related on the male side. "All the bands at a place, however, show a composition of bilateral kins i.e., kins from both affinal and agnatic sides. It consists of marriageable spouses—that indicates inclusion of women's (or wife's) lineages." (Adhikary, 1978, 42)

Looking at the division of labour by sex, it is mentioned (Sen, 53) that both men and women join in hunting. (Adhikary, on the other hand, mentions that hunting wild animals is taboo for women. Is it likely that this taboo is restricted to large mammals in the deep forests?) Both are excellent trackers. The hunting nets are repaired by both men and women.(54) But the deep forests are taboo for women. (Adhikary, 1978, 43) During menstruation the women are not supposed to touch the hunting nets and other implements, a prohibition that is quite prevalent among various foraging tribes around the world, including the !Kung of Southern Africa (Shostak, 1981, 243). Women are expected to refrain from sexual activity when their husbands are out hunting.

On the division of labour in the manufacture of rope, there is some conflict between the accounts of Sen and Adhikary. According to

Adhikary, it is the men alone who go out to collect the fibre from the forests. According to Sen, men and women collect the chop fibre from the forests; while the whole family, including children, joins in rope-making. Gathering of roots, tubers, leaves, etc., is the speciality of the young women and girls. The sale or barter of rope to the peasants of the neighbouring villages is entirely the preserve of women. They consequently have to decide on whether to sell or barter, or what to acquire. Childcare, as noticed for the !Kung (Lee, 1982, 41 and Shostak, 1981, 238) is the job of women, specifically mothers. In the case of the Birhor, when women go out for food gathering, infants and babies are looked after by one or two old women who remain behind. The goats are grazed by those, males and females, too young or too old to participate in hunting.

In house-building there is some division of labour. The men go to the jungle to bring leaves and branches. In the construction of huts, women too join in. The huts are conical and there is no question of any roof. There does not seem to be any taboo, similar to that among settled agriculturist tribes, against women roofing.

In foraging societies (see Slocum, 1975, 43) gathering provides the major portion of the diet. This, however, does not mean that women do all the gathering, some of it is done by men. Lee (1982, 40) estimates that some 56 per cent of weight and calories are provided by women and 44 per cent by men. It is quite likely that the same proportions hold true for the Birhor.

Income is distributed among the Birhor in two ways. In the case of rope-making and gathering, both of which are carried out by each family, the proceeds are kept by the family. In the case of hunting, which is done cooperatively, 50 per cent accrues to the owner of the net and the rest is divided equally between all the nuclear families who participate in the hunt. (Sen, 1966, 53-54) Trapping of live monkeys is also done cooperatively. But the trapping has to be followed by exchange in order to realize the value of the product; it is not directly consumed as is the case with animals hunted for food. In the case of live animals trapped for sale, the individual hunter keeps the whole cash for himself (Adhikary, 1984, 36)—it is not shared as is meat from hunting. Production for exchange has different rules of income, as compared to production for direct consumption; though the process of production in both instances may be cooperative.

The Birhor are patrilocal, but patrilocality is not so strictly followed. Adhikary mentions that even after marriage, brothers as well as sisters

tend to live and move together. Instead of the generalized form of exchange of women (as in bride price) the Birhor have a direct, mutual exchange of women, of sisters and daughters. (Adhikary, 1984, 58). The Birhor are also patrilineal; but with the very low level of production, which does not result in any accumulation, there is not much in terms of property to be passed on, other than perhaps "a few brass utensils". (Sen, 51)

Birhor settlements have a council composed of all elders of the group, both male and female. The leader of the council is necessarily male. And it is males alone who are initiated into the various rituals and magico-religious practices that are necessary to deal with the "spirit world", through which alone a supply of game and chop fibre can be assured. But it is worth noting that women do participate in the settlement council, unlike the situation among settled tribes, like Santhal, Munda, etc. Regular political participation by women in the village council has also been reported in the case of the Korwa, a tribe that has only recently come into settled agriculture. The Korwa, according to the accounts of very old persons from the tribe, used to have separate councils of the elder men and women. If the two councils arrived at different decisions, then they had to sit together and come to a common decision. The above information about Korwa councils was mentioned by Nanho Singh, a Korwa of village Turi Munda in the Ranka Block of Palamu District.

Movements of the Birhor are decided "primarily on mutual understanding" and "there is no central authority in any band guiding their movements." (Adhikary, 1984, 24) The beginnings of such authority may be seen in the identification of a band with the name of some man or locality. This is in contrast to the !Kung situation where "core membership in a band, as well as 'ownership' of water holes and other resources, is inherited through women as well as men." (Shostak, 1981, 242)

The marriage ceremony includes a mock "capture" of the bride by the bridegroom assisted by his brothers and cousins. This perhaps points to the prevalence at one time of actual "marriage by capture". There is a system of direct exchange of women.When a girl of one household is married to a boy of another, the former expects one girl from the latter as compensation."But if the latter cannot afford the same or do not have any [girl] at disposal at that time, it moves along with the former thereby cooperating in day to day economic spheres." (Adhikary, 1978, 42) The system of exchange of women thus partially

acts to compose bands.

The "brideservice" performed in this case is quite different from that performed in agriculturist tribes by young and poor men, who cannot acquire the goods that must be given as "bridewealth". (Collier and Rosaldo, 1981, 286–87) Here the service is a substitute for the girl they are unable to provide in exchange. Further, the service through cooperation in economic activities, is performed not by the bridegroom alone, but by his family as a whole.

There is a taboo against menstruating women participating in rituals. But, it is interesting to note that this taboo extends to the husbands of the menstruating women as well. In the case of "pollution" due to birth or death, it is not the woman alone or the family concerned, that become "polluted". Rather, the whole settlement becomes ceremonially unclean till the period of "pollution" is over.

From the above account it seems clear that although there is a division of labour, it is not so well defined as in the agriculturist tribes. While childcare, food preparation and gathering are mainly the responsibility of the women, in hunting, rope-making and house-construction there does not seem to be much of a division of labour. "Core" activities, such as ploughing, roofing, and so on are not taboo and the division of labour is not so clear-cut and well-defined. The lack of a rigidly-defined division of labour is a characteristic of foragers, whether it be the !Kung (Shostak: "The division of labour by sex is not rigidly defined." 1981, 46) or the Tiwi (Martin and Voorhies: "Among the Tiwi, then, there is no simple dichotomization of subsistence activities by sex. Hunting and gathering are practised by both men and women." 1975, 197)

The above account also suggests that women regulary participate in the political affairs of the settlement, and that "pollution" taboos are not confined to them alone.

In addition, the forest (land) on which the Birhor depend for their livelihood is not produced. Nor is there any notion of corporate property attached to the land. In foraging society residence gives a right to use resources and to sharing. Residence, however, is not a chance affair; all those residing together are in some way related. But this relation, which may be through marriage, is different from the relation of the Munda or Ho villages, where descent is traced to a common male ancestor. There is no such notion of a kin corporate group nor one of property. Where property in the family, or among women, is concerned, there is no accumulation in terms of instru-

ments of labour and general means of production. What can be inherited is, at best, "a few brass utensils". Thus, in these terms (i.e. what can be inherited) no property exists.

But, there is a division of labour in various forms of production, though it is not so well-defined. Along with this, there is also an unequal distribution of labour—with women doing more of the total social labour (childcare and food preparation included) than men. There is no clear evidence on whether the distribution of consumption is unequal in favour of men. What has been noticed (mentioned by Bharat Mahto, activist in Palamu) is that the Korwas (some of whom, as mentioned earlier, came to settled agriculture only sometime in this century) do not have strict rules about women eating after men. Often they eat together. During periods of work, depending on the need, women may eat before men. Women eating after men (and children) is one of the ways in which unequal distribution of food is institutionalized.

Relations of production and exchange within the family reflect an important "sexual asymmetry"—"a basic imbalance in the nature and organization of obligations and the availability of public reward." (Collier and Rosaldo, 1981, 279) The exchange between women and men, as Collier and Rosaldo emphasize, is not balanced and equal. Women's production is essentially meant for the home, for feeding families. A part of men's production, on the other hand, is to be distributed through the group and, thus, plays a role in maintaining social relations outside the family. In the case of the Birhor, the hunting of monkeys, in which men participate to a larger extent than women, produces meat which is distributed through the group according to certain rules. Men's involvement in production destined for distribution outside the family is already noticeable.

In decision-making within the family there does not seem to be any exclusion of women. But despite all the autonomy of this kind of decision-making (which women have as a result of their monopoly of sale/barter of rope), the final authority nevertheless lies with the men. They lead not only the band as a whole but also the family. "Authority lies usually in the hand of the father, husband or the older male member according to the composition of the household though it is not expressed in any formal manner." (Adhikary, 1978, 44)

The ritual, magico-religious sphere is the preserve of men. At the same time, women do regularly participate in political affairs; though they are excluded from leadership. The "public" sphere is then not

the preserve of men, though it is dominated by them. This "public" sphere itself is not as important as it is in the settled tribes, where land is involved. It becomes important only in times of conflict with other groups, or when there is severe disease, etc. It does, however, dominate the private sphere.

In the Birhor, as, perhaps, in other foraging tribes the categories of genders are already established. But the absence of a surplus in production inhibits the development of that full control of women characteristic of patriarchy. For that process we must turn to the agriculturist communities.

One of the objectives in looking, however cursorily, at the situation of the Birhor and Korwa in Jharkhand, is to provide a reference point of foragers, one from which to look at the position of the agriculturist-cum-gatherer tribes in the region. This does not mean that we regard the Birhor as necessarily, and in all respects, being directly the forerunners of the Santhal, Munda and others; though legend has it that the Birhor are the descendants of the older of the two brothers, while the Mundas are the descendants of the younger.

The important role of exchange with the agriculturists around them (rope for rice) shows that we cannot regard them, in their present state, as being relics of a pre-neolithic period. These relations and their effect on the internal structure of the Birhor need analysis, something we have not undertaken. Fox's analysis (1969) of the continuation of foraging as a form of occupational specialization (supply of ropes to agriculturists in the area in this case) and Woodburn's hypothesis of "pressure from outside" as a factor "which tends, in combination with other factors, to push societies towards immediate-return systems" (1980, 112) need to be considered.

Yet, foragers today, including the Birhor of Jharkhand, do tell us something about the ways of foragers in the distant past. Both the tools and methods of production of foragers were most probably not very different in the past from what they are today. ". . . the archaeological evidence suggests that most of the basic technical equipment available to modern hunters was already available in the pre-neolithic period." (Woodburn, 1980, 113)

A study of pre-neolithic cave paintings in central India (Kumkum Roy, 1987) suggests a clear correspondence with the currently-prevailing division of labour in foragers. ". . . unlike the view that while men hunt women gather in hunting-gathering societies, [in] the case of central India in the mesolithic period women appear to have

participated in the hunt apart from the all important task of gathering which in any case accounts for the major source of food in tropical climates." (Chakravarti, 1990)

We will return to these questions in the concluding chapter, in trying to use the anthropological material to throw some light on (or, make us ask some questions about) the process through which patriarchy was established.

4

The Agricultural Community

Most of the tribes in Jharkhand are not pure gatherers. The major tribes of the area, the Santhal, Munda, Ho and Oraon are all agriculturist tribes. But, as we shall see, they are not full-fledged agriculturists and gathering provides a substantial portion of their annual product. Despite the continued importance of gathering, the agricultural community is a negation of many of the features of the foraging band. This is reflected in, among other things, the origin myths of the tribes.

S.C. Roy in his 1912 account mentions the existence of two groups of Munda clans, known as *kompat* and *khangar*. These two groups do not inter-marry and inter-dine. They, of course, are not of equal social and economic status. The *khangar* are of lower social status and usually have only small bits of land. (Sachidananda 1979, 86) This reflects their greater reliance on gathering of forest produce, artisanal work and agricultural labour. Sachidananda mentions that the *khangar*are less "Hinduized", which is an indicator of their greater reliance on gathering; this is not the case with the higher-status *kompat*.

The socially and economically superior *kompat* Mundas do not intermarry with the *khangar*. "If somebody from one of the higher classes takes a fancy for a girl of the lower class he may keep her as a mistress without marrying her, a separate apartment in the house may be given to her. . . " (Sachidananda 1979, 108) But, in a manner familiar in caste society, the man will not accept cooked food from the girl's hands!

The lower status *khangar* are also known as *Marang* (i.e. elder brother) Mundas. This, as S.C. Roy points out, is a significant name. The myth about the formation of these two groups of Mundas, has it that, of two brothers, the elder brother unknowingly ate some unclean meat, human placenta, and for this reason was excommunicated. (S.C. Roy 1912, 220 and Sachidananda 1979, 77) The *Marang* or *khangar* Mundas are supposed to be the descendants of this elder brother. This may well denote a historical anteriority of the group, a

group who continued with the older practices which centred on gathering, unlike the newer, basically agriculturist Mundas. The Birhor are themselves supposed to be predecessors of the Mundas, and are acknowledged to be, in a sense, descendants of the elder brother.

The Mundas are not alone in having an origin myth to explain their superiority over the descendants of their elder brother. The early Aryan tribes had a similar myth which explained the superiority of agriculturists over food gatherers.

> It is the left side (of Vena) which produces the ungainly, primitive successor who has to be exiled and the right side which produces the appropriate successor, conforming to the symbolism of the left being impure and the right pure. The association of Nisada with the wild tribes, food-gatherers perhaps, is juxtaposed with the introduction of agriculture by Prithu and it is through the latter that the earth prospers. That the elder son was banished in favour of the younger could only be justified by pointing to the inadequacies of the elder. The contrast however is so extreme that one almost suspects an association of guilt with the usurpation by the younger son. (Thapar 1978, 308)

Romila Thapar then goes on to ask:

> Could this myth have symbolized the overpowering of the legitimately settled food-gathering cultures by the agriculturists, in a period which saw the gradual encroaching of agriculture into new lands via the grants of land to religious donees and secular officials, when the former cultures would henceforth always be associated with the dark and the ugly and the latter with that which is beautiful and prosperous? (1978, 308)

With agriculture, the labour process changes when compared to foraging. Production is no more a mere taking from nature. Land itself is now produced by labour. Further, land is no longer the subject of labour but becomes an instrument of labour, something that the labourer uses to work upon the other part of the means of production, raw materials.

While the products of gathering may become more or less immediately available for use, agriculture is characterized by a considerable waiting period. With agriculture there is a lengthening of the period of production. The waiting period has important consequences for the relations of production.(Meillassoux, 1981, 39 ff.) In the first place, the waiting period means that there must be some other activity

(gathering) which will meet consumption needs in the period between sowing and harvesting. This non-agricultural product must be available as a prior hoard (primitive accumulation) at least for the initial cycle. Subsequently, both means of subsistence and seed can be made available from the harvest. As a result, there is a relation of anteriority and posteriority in the production process.

The agricultural community, unlike the foraging band, cannot be temporary. Once a cycle of production is completed, the relation between the various producers does not end with the distribution of the product. The relation continues into the next cycle as both seed and means of subsistence have to be made available from one cycle to the next. The sequential cycle of production very easily lends itself to the seniority of the older generation being established as a power relation. Further, the notion of "original settlers" also seems to have come up to justify a privileged position for those claiming descent from such "original settlers".

Agriculture in Jharkhand is of two kinds. There is the settled plough agriculture in the fertile low-lying rice lands (known as *don*) and the intermittent, cyclical cultivation of the poorer uplands (known as *tanr*). The uplands are not really cultivated in the slash-and-burn manner. But the lands are not cultivated continuously; rather cultivation is usually carried out in a three-year cycle. Besides this, gathering plays an integral part in their lives. Gathering did not merely provide the initial means of subsistence to start the agricultural cycle, but it continues to provide an important part of the annual product.

To what extent gathering and agriculture influence the economic and social structures, including gender relations, is a matter that will be discussed subsequently. Here it should be noted that the basic notion of the community, essentially a village community, is an agrarian one, identifying common descent from the "original settlers" of the soil. The community is not, as in the case of the foraging Birhor, composed of all families who happen to be present. Thus, we start with the provision that agriculture is dominant because "it determines the general social organization to which other economic, social and political activities are subordinate." (Meillasoux, 1981, 35) There are different relations established in the course of gathering and the ritual hunting, but these are temporary and, perhaps, confined to specific activities.

At the same time, we should note that the forest and its flowering seasons play a very important role in the ritual life of these tribes. No

village can be without its sacred grove (*sarna*)—this can even be used as a key indicator to map the boundaries of the Jharkhand region. So, the question of the influence of gathering and agriculture on economic, social and political structures certainly needs to be discussed.

The village community that existed, according to the accounts of the nineteenth century missionaries and colonial administrators, was a form of corporate community. The lands of the village were held by the village community in common. They were allotted to individual families (more correctly, lineages); but they could not be alienated or otherwise transferred without the approval of the community. Among the Santhal, for instance, "At the founding of a new village, each Santal receives land not by individual seizure but by village decision, and it is only when he has brought his holding under cultivation, that he acquires a permanent right to remain in possession. If he desires to exchange his land with another Santal, he can do so only with village approval. . . He cannot otherwise transfer land out of his family." (Archer, 1984, 25)

The individuals relate in a double way—both as members of the community (proprietors) and as workers. Without belonging to the community (lineage?) the individual cannot acquire land in the village; but without labour the individual cannot acquire the right to possess the land. Ownership and labour are combined, not separated. They are, however, not combined for all those who formed part of the community in a real sense. Women relate to the communal property only as workers and not as owners. Even in this earliest form of communal property there is already difference and distinction. While owners are all workers too, the reverse does not hold. Communal property itself is based on rigid distinctions between owners and non-owners. It is based on the appropriation of the labour of non-owning producers, in this case in-marrying women, by the corporate community, or by those who act on its behalf and monopolize its economic and political positions. "In the most ancient, primitive communities, equality of rights could only apply at most to members of the community; women, slaves and foreigners were excluded from this equality as a matter of course." (Engels, *Anti-Duhring,* 144 quoted in Meillassoux, 1981, 145)

Among the Munda, Ho and Oraon there is not just the exclusion of women from the owning community, but the further distinction between higher and lower ancestral lineages. The descendants of the "original settlers" (***khuntkattidars***) form the community that owns the

land. The cultivated lands are not held in common. But any transfer of these lands out of the "original settler" lineages is only possible with the consent of the community.

Besides the *khuntkattidars* (also known as *bhuinhars* in Oraon territory) there are other peasant households of the same tribe, but from subsidiary lineages. These subsidiary lineages have occupancy rights but are not members of the village community. They are called the *praja* (subjects). Hoffman, a Jesuit missionary who had seen the Birsa Munda-led uprising (*ulgulan*) from Sarwada in the heart of Munda territory (in the present-day Khunti sub-division of Ranchi district) mentions that the *praja* were usually relatives from the female side. This is repeated by K.S.Singh. (1978, 30) Discussions with many Mundas (including Dr Ram Dayal Munda) and investigation in the Maranghatta area, confirm that such a relation (*praja* being relatives from the female side) still exists. The third group of families in the village are those of the subsidiary functional castes and labourers. They have well-defined rights and duties. But they have no political standing in the traditional village community system. They are there merely to service the agricultural community.

The rights of members of the community in trees were not organized in the same way as rights of possession of agricultural land. Trees on a household's own land were, of course, the property of that household. Those on village land, whether wasteland or in the forest, were regarded as the property of the village. The right to collect produce from these trees was distributed among the village households. But, as Archer points out with regard to the Santhal, "the exact distribution of trees can at any time be revised by the community."(1984, 26) This right of the community to redistribute the trees among its members is now more notional than real. But the difference between property in land and in trees should be noticed—the former is possessed in perpetuity by a lineage, while the latter is only allotted to a household.

The communities of these tribes were also politically organized, though the political organization did not amount to what could properly be called a state. There was no distinct state structure, bureaucracy and standing army separate from the people. The rights to the land were those of the village community and not those of any superior landlord. Even when an exogenous state structure was established in the form of the Nagbanshi Raj of Chotanagpur, the raja had no claim to the land, which remained that of the village com-

munity. As K.S.Singh points out, "The Kolarian tribes such as the Mundas in Ranchi. . . with their communal agrarian organization borne out by their khuntkatti villages show little propensity towards development of the state." (1985, 36)

Each village had a headman (*munda*) and a priest (*pahan*). These posts, as all other posts, were hereditary. They also carried with them some amount of the best quality land in the village. Though, among the Oraon, for instance, the *pahan* had the obligation to feast the village twice a year; and the *pahnai* (priest's) land may have been just sufficient for this purpose. But overall, even within the restricted village community,which itself was composed of superior lineages, there were the dominant lineages of the headman and priest. They were not only politically and ritually important but also had a superior economic position.

The dominant lineages were based on the village community, but had begun to separate into a distinct stratum. "The clan system in itself leads to higher and lower ancestral lineages, a distinction which is still further developed through intermixture with subjugated clans etc." (Marx, *Grundrisse*, 475).

LINEAGE

The land of the village community is, in effect, not a form of communal property available to all who might labour on it (as it is with foraging bands). Rather it has already dissolved from communal to group property—what Marx and Engels had identified as "kin corporate property". This form of property is accessible to all who are members of the group and inaccessible to all who are not. Membership of the group (kin or, in more familiar terminology, clan) determines residence and right of access to the land. It is not, as in foraging bands, residence which determines membership of a group and access to its land.

Does the clan, or a section of the clan, own the land? Hoffman's memorandum on the *khuntkatti* village points out that the village is organized around the principle of clan—in Mundari *kili* (which becomes transformed into the *gotra* of the caste system, with the difference that the *gotra* is purely a marriage-determining relation, while the *kili* also has implications with regard to land). Each Mundari village has its burial ground (*sasandiri*), which is strictly exclusive to

a particular *kili*. The remains of a person (usually the bones after burning) are placed under the stone slabs. The stones record the name of the *kili* to which the burial ground belongs. Thus, Hoffman reports the Mundas saying, "The burial stones are our title deeds [to the land]." A person of a *kili* other than the one to which the *sasandiri* belongs, cannot possibly own land in that village.

But it is not the clan as a whole that owns the land. Not everyone belonging to the *kili* of the village has a right to its land; it is necessary also to belong to the particular local branch of the clan, in other words, to the particular lineage or *khunt*. As K.S.Singh points out, "It is the lineage and not the clan which plays the dynamic role in the reclamation of land, establishment of the village, etc. This distinction is made at a more advanced stage of anthropological theory and ethnographic research. We may say that what Hoffman describes as the function of the clan in the matter of reclamation of land, its distribution, succession and inheritance applies more appropriately to the lineage." (Singh, 1978, 30)

What is a lineage? It is a section of a clan, claiming descent from a common ancestor, in this case male. In these tribes not only can no new lineage be admitted into *khuntkatti* status, but the major offices of the village are also restricted to particular lineages.

The rise of dominant lineages means that communal property has dissolved into group property (that of the local clan) and this has advanced further in the direction of the dissolution of group property itself. This is because the group property is realized in individual families, and in this realization of group property the dominant lineages have a superior position. But with land still not being transferable outside the *khunt* and with the permission of the village community being necessary for any transfers, group property has still not fully broken down. There is a concentration of political rights in the dominant lineages. But they do not as yet stand outside society, and thus do not constitute what can properly be called a ruling class.

Privileged access to land and superior political rights do not of themselves yield anything. They have to be realized through labour. Productivity is not so high that owners can cease labouring. (That condition would be necessary for a full-fledged class system and ruling class to emerge.) But there is a class of non-owning producers, the women, whose labour is appropriated by the owning group, or its head. In the marriage ceremony the clan of the in-marrying wives is ritualistically changed to that of the husband. But this ritual does

not give the women full membership of their husbands' clans; they still remain non-owners. Patrilocality assures that the labour of the women will be accumulated (if productivity is high enough for some accumulation) in the family of the husband. (Coontz and Henderson 1986)

Sahlins (1972) had identified household production as the key element in the development of surplus and economic differentiation. But that was in a foraging situation, where the returns to women's gathering were more or less certain and similar, while men's hunting could produce either big returns or nothing at all. But in the agriculturist-gathering societies that we are analysing, there is no real economic role for uncertain hunting activities and there is no differentiation, at the level of certainty of returns, between male and female jobs. But the non-owning status of women (which means patrilineality) along with patrilocality ensure that women are the only non-owning producers, whose labour is accumulated. Since there is a distinction between those performing the labour (women) and those in whose hands the accumulation takes place, it can justifiably be said that women's labour is appropriated by men. As will be seen later, women's labour is a major part of social labour, but any accumulation that takes place is in male hands and thus outside the control of women.

The marriage system and the rules of clan exogamy both worked to increase the labour available under the tutelage of the dominant lineages. Polygamy was more or less restricted to the dominant lineages, not just to those of the *khuntkattidars*, but even more so to those of the *manki*, *munda* and *pahan khunts*. This directly made more non-owner labour (that of the women) available for accumulation. Having more than one wife was a sign of wealth, since bride-price has to be paid for each wife. In turn, polygamy, increased wealth, as the number of non-owning producers was increased.

Further, the bride-price system also helped accumulation in the superior lineages. Bride-price was (is ?) higher for women from the superior lineages, than for other women. Dalton mentions that among the Ho there was a higher bride-price for women of the "manki dignity"; over and above the usual bride-price, a substantial amount (many heads of cattle) called *pan* had to be paid. (Dalton, 1960, 190) There is no reason why a similar system should not have held for the Munda too. Consequently, the superior lineage would have paid less in bride-price for the women whose labour it acquired, then it

received for the women, whose labour it gave up. It is also likely that in the event of inability to pay the full bride-price, bride-service as a subsidiary peasant may have been accepted. (Commutation of bride-price into bride-service has been a common practice in the area.)

What is the significance of the *praja*, the subsidiary peasant lineages, being relatives on the female side? Hoffman in his note on the "Khuntkatti system" mentions this, and it is repeated by K.S.Singh in his article on the "Munda land system". Rekha Dhan speaks of the same "affinal ties between the dominant lineage and the attached."(1961, 63) Bringing more land under cultivation was only possible by increasing the number of workers on the land. Labour supply was increased, beyond that of the growth of the family and polygamous marriage, by bringing in new families—who were from those clans into which women from the *khuntkatti* families had married. The strict rule of clan exogamy served to make such labour from subsidiary lineages available to the senior lineages. The privilege of marrying women of the *khuntkatti* lineages meant access to reclaimable land, which was given in return for accepting a subsidiary status and paying a tribute to the *khuntkattidars*. Privileged access to land and superior political rights needed surplus labour for dominance to be transformed into accumulation.

Before going any further it should be noted that the above discussion of the *khuntakatti* system holds not only for the Munda, but also for the Ho as well as for the Oraon and Chero (where it was known as the *bhuinhari* system). The relation of anteriority and posteriority characteristic of agrarian communities (Meillassoux) is repeated in all these tribes. Such dominant lineages, however, do not seem to have developed in the same way among the Santhal. Families of the village headman (*majhi*) and other such officials of the village did develop privileged positions. But there did not develop a general privileged position for all descendants of the original settlers. This factor may account for the generally noted stronger community feeling among the Santhal, as compared to the Munda and other tribes.

Romila Thapar mentions that in pre-state, Rig Vedic society, ". . . there was a distinction between the chariot-riding warriors who were pre-eminently the guardians and protectors of the *vis* and the latter who were more sedentary and were the producers of both pastoral and agricultural items." She also points out that an earlier, closer relationship, between the senior and junior lineages of Rig Vedic society is suggested "in the statement that the *Ksatra* and the

vis should eat from the same vessel, which in a society placing a high value on commensality was a substantial statement of relatively equal status." (1984, 31)

Among the Mundas something similar to pre-state Vedic society can be observed. There is the break-up of the tribe into hierarchical groups *kompat* and *khangar*. Among the superior *kompat* group the senior and junior lineages of the *khuntkattidar* and the *praja* have developed. The distance between these two is not as great as that between these two together and the more food-gathering *khangar*. Relations with the *khangar* are virtually as between caste Hindus and outcaste untouchables, even in the matter of sexual relations between men of the superior and women of the inferior groups.

The difference between this Munda structure and the pre-state, Rig Vedic society analysed by Romila Thapar, lies mainly in the factor that the superior *kompat* Mundas had not been separated from labour on the land or in the forest. Neither the inferior *khangar* nor even the agriculturist *praja* were the sole producers of the agricultural and other goods, as were the *vis* in Rig Vedic society. Further, there does not seem to have been any difference in the arms carried by these two sections. Other than in this crucial factor, there is a strong resemblance of the pre-state Rig Vedic formations to Munda social structure.

5

Labour, Income and Consumption

In order to understand the nature of the accumulation process, the sources of labour, the manner of control and the effects of these, we must look into a number of aspects of the production process and isolate the key production relations that exist. At this stage we will consider the internal relations of production in isolation from the external relations that impinge on the community. This is not only for convenience of exposition, but also because the effect of external relations, particularly where they appear in the form of trading relations, depends on the nature of relations existing within the community. In the transformation brought about by trade, it is not the trading relation that determines the nature of the new relations that come into being, but the relations existing in that community.(Marx) It is for this reason that we first analyse the internal relations of production existing in the tribal communities.

At the same time, we should also be clear that looking at the relations of production in the village, or within the family for that matter, does not in any way imply that those who may be identified as dominating the production process at the village level (or, within the family) are automatically, in some sense, a ruling class. The question of a ruling class cannot be decided merely by looking at the village as it exists, but only by analysing the relations between the village and the outside world, the state in particular. To identify differences within the village, to identify contradictions, even classes, is a far cry from conflating the classes with the ruling class.

To get a clear picture of the production relations, we can first look at them in their separate aspects and then relate them, in order to summarize and characterize the relations of production. What are the spheres in which production relations should be analysed? It is usual to divide labour into "production" and domestic work. But this division does not follow from the characteristics of the tasks them-

selves. The division into spheres is itself the result of a relation of production. As contended by Delphy, ". . . far from it being the nature of the work performed by women which explains their relation to production, it is their relations of production which explain why their work is excluded from the realm of value." (1984, 60)

On what basis can we separate the production of rice from its processing (pounding in a *dheki*, etc.) and cooking, particularly when the rice is consumed within the family itself, and label the former as "production" and the latter as "domestic work"? From a narrow (i.e. uncritical) capitalist point of view, there is some meaning (though it is a meaning which needs to be transcended in theory and practice) to separating the production of exchange value from the production of use value. But when the whole of the production being considered is to be consumed within the production unit (the family), what is the basis for separating one sphere of production from another? The basis lies not in the nature of the product or of the production process, but in the relation of production in which the two spheres of production are carried on. The separation of family labour into "production" and "domestic work" is the result of a division of labour, that division of labour whereby the two genders of men and women are established. The "domestic" domain is then the exclusive (though not the sole) domain of women. It is the jobs that are assigned to women that become included in the domestic domain. Collecting firewood, for example, is no different from any other gathering activity but because it is assigned to women it is included in "domestic work" and not in "production"

Two schemes of differentiating types of labour have generally been used in the analysis. The first, mentioned earlier, relates the labour process to the kind of relationship with nature (land) that is involved. Labour is then different accordingly as land is the subject of labour, as in gathering, or an instrument of labour, as in agriculture. The second, relates not to the nature of the labour process but to its objective—labour is then distinguished according to whether its products are to be exchanged or consumed by the producing unit itself. This is the characteristic capitalist difference, which strictly accords the status of "productive labour" only to labour that produces exchange value.

A third possible differentiation of labour is on the basis of whether or not the labour is alienated, where the concept of alienation can be used to refer not only to the ownership (control) of the product of

labour (whether it remains that of the producer or not), but also to whether or not the labour process is supervized by someone other than the producer.

None of the above-mentioned schemes of differentiation will be of help in delineating spheres of labour in the present case. While denying that there is any validity in describing only a portion of the family labour as productive, we may nevertheless, for want of better (non-gendered) terms, use the conventional "domestic work" and "production".

DOMESTIC WORK

To what extent is the gender division of labour that makes "domestic work" an exclusive female domain established in the Jharkhand tribes under discussion (mainly Munda, Santhal, Ho, Oraon and Kharia)? In the Munda, Ho, Oraon and Kharia tribes men do not, as a rule, participate in the domestic labour of cleaning, cooking and childcare. They do these jobs only if the woman is ill or otherwise unable to tackle them. Men doing such jobs are not, however, the objects of ridicule they are in caste Hindu society. Hoffman pointed out, "Every Munda, man or woman, is able to cook the ordinary meal." (1950, 202)

A slightly different situation prevails among the Santhal. According to Santhal women from Hazaribagh and Santhal Parganas, their men's contribution to domestic work is not restricted to the times when the woman is ill. On returning home the men do, off an on, help in the housework, by fetching water or pounding rice in the *dheki*. Further, they do regularly look after the children when the women are cooking.

Different childbirth practices in these tribes point to the possibility that non-gendered roles may have prevailed at some time. Among the Oraon no men are present at the time of childbirth. The umbilical cord is cut by midwives. The mother and all the other women attending the birth are unclean until they undergo ritual purification. (S.C.Roy, 1985, 119–21) This is more or less the practice in caste Hindu society. Among the Santhal, however, though it is women who act as midwives, the father of the child is also considered to be polluted along with the mother. (N.Prasad, 1961, 72 and Dalton, 213) The same situation prevails among the Munda, with the difference that it is the

job of the father to cut the child's umbilical cord. The ritual impurity of both parents points to the possibility of an earlier practice of the father actually assisting at the birth.

Among the Ho the father acts as midwife. Only in the case of his absence is an experienced woman engaged to fulfil the role. In 1925 D.N.Majumdar reported that the Hos "do not engage experienced women to watch the delivery. The husband and wife are secluded in one room and it is the duty of the former to help the latter in delivery." (1925, 179) The father cut the cord, prepared hot water in which mother and child bathed and cooked food for both. Dalton too points out that during the period of isolation during and after childbirth, it is the husband who has to cook for the mother. (190) Given the close connection between the Munda, Santhal and Ho tribes, and the possibility that they were originally one tribe, it is not unlikely that in all of them, the Ho practice of the man acting as midwife may have prevailed at some time in the past. A doctor (Anne Mattan of Noamundi, Singhbhum) mentions that the practice of the father assisting at the birth still continues among the Ho.

Couvade has been taken to mean "a husband's observance of food taboos, restriction of ordinary practices, and in some cases seclusion during his wife's delivery and postpartum period." (Paige and Paige, 1981, 189 quoted in Henrietta Moore, 1988, 29) There has been debate on whether couvade is an affirmation of social paternity, or an acknowledgment of the husband's role in giving birth. (Henrietta Moore, 1988, 29) In these Jharkhand tribes we can see various ways of men's involvement in childbirth, ranging from merely being considered impure, to actually assisting at the birth. The couvade in Jharkhand is not just a question of symbolic observances, but of real participation in the labour of childbirth, which includes preparing food for the mother, and looking after the other needs of mother and child. This is more than an acknowledgement of social paternity, which can well be accomplished by mere symbolic action. It is an acknowledgement of the husband's role in giving birth and assisting in the labour of childbirth.

PRODUCTION

Coming now to the conventionally labelled "production" activities, we should note that these are of three types: gathering-hunting

activities where land is the subject of labour, and, in agriculture itself, hoe agriculture and plough agriculture.

Surveys by Settlement Officers in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries showed that agricultural production was not enough to produce sufficient food for the year. In 1891 B.C.Basu concluded from his survey of Lohardaga that "the great body of raiyats cannot indulge in what will be called a luxury in this country of a full diet of cereals all-round the year." Twenty years later, Sifton surveying 240 villages in six out of ten *thanas* of the Ranchi Sadar sub-division (present Ranchi district) found that only 6.5 per cent to 20 per cent of the holdings amounted to 14 acres or more and were thus sufficient to support an average sized family. (Schwerin, 1978, 25) Grain was supplemented by gathering various kinds of forest produce.

A look at the food calendar will show the continued importance of gathering. The calendar given below was made for the Hos of Saranda in Singhbhum in the 1950s. In this well-forested region at that time the amount of forest produce gathered for exchange was not as substantial as it is now. But the food calendar does reveal that the gathering of various forest products was not undertaken only for exchange, but has been an important part of production in this region.

FOOD CALENDAR

JANUARY-FEBRUARY	People live on their production, e.g. rice, maize and millet.
MARCH-APRIL	People live on roots, yams, *mahua* (a kind of beverage known as *sorage* is made), *pipal sag* (leaves), fruits like *kendu*, *char* and *bar*.
MAY-JUNE	People live on leaves, particularly *koynar sag*, roots *orga* and fruits such as *jamun*, mango, etc.
JULY-AUGUST	They live on mushrooms called *cathu*, *potkoi* and mostly on leaves, like *bhaji*, *upundu sirgit* and *munga*. The leaves constitute the only type of food during the rainy season. *sorge* (*mahua* beverage) is another important food and constitutes the chief diet for about six months

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER	They live on *gondili* and *irie*.
NOVEMBER-DECEMBER	They live on maize and *gora* rice.

Source: Rekha O Dhan, "The Hos of Saranda", *Bulletin of the Bihar Tribal Research Institute*, January 1961, 49.

Apart from the above foodstuffs, the forests are the main source of wood for domestic, agricultural and building purposes. There are varieties of plants, roots and herbs which are used for medicinal and magical purposes. The roots, fruits and leaves of various plants are used for making oil. The barks of trees and creepers are used for making rope. (Dhan, 1961, 50)

The production in which these tribes have been and are involved is of three types, covering three historical phases in the development of society—gathering, shifting hoe agriculture and settled, plough agriculture along with the associated animal husbandry. Besides these three, they are also involved to some extent in the modern activity of selling their labour power. Taking the first three, we should look at the divisions of labour established.

Gathering now means the collection of various kinds of forest produce, while hunting has not much more than ritual significance. In the collection of forest produce there is a considerable sharing of jobs with some, not very rigid, division of labour. In the case of fruits, flowers and seeds, the usual practice is for men to shake the trees, while women and children collect the produce. Gathering activity engages the whole family. Only older women stay behind to look after infants. Pregnant women too participate in gathering activities, with, perhaps, some restriction with regard to "heavy" work. (Fernandes and Menon, 1987, 75)

Gathering includes the collection of firewood and sal leaves to be used as plates. This is usually done by women. Men do cut timber that is needed for house construction. Cutting of timber for firewoood is also, to an extent, men's work: they cut the logs and bring them to the house. Only among the Ho, is the further job of splitting the logs done by men, otherwise it is done by women.

In gathering there is one major taboo related to the manner of carrying the produce—women carry on the head while men carry with a shoulder pole, or, when available, in a bullock cart. Both carrying poles and bullock carts are taboo for women. Interestingly,

the method used to enquire about the sex of a new-born child is to ask whether the child will carry on the head or the shoulder. This mode of carrying is a clear identification of gender, enforced by a strict taboo. In this carrying-pole taboo, the Mundas are an exception. Among them, acording to Munda women from Jaldega of Gumla district, women are not barred from using the carrying pole.

Shifting cultivation is carried on on the hill slopes (*tanr* land) around the village. In most areas it does not involve cutting down forests, but only clearing shrubs, bushes and some small trees. But these lands are not cultivated on a regular basis, as are the low-lying rice lands in the valleys. The cycle of cultivation now is usually about three years.

The clearing of the land is done by the family, men and women together. Removing stones and pebbles is the work of women and children. Hoeing is mainly done by the women, with some help from men. In case the land is ploughed, it is, of course, done by the men with a light plough. Sowing is done by the women while weeding is done by both women and men. Women and children guard the crop during the day, and men guard it at night. Harvesting is done by both, while men alone tie up the bundles of sheaves. Women carry the stalks on their heads, while men may bring them in on a bullock cart. Threshing by hand is done exclusively by women, while threshing with animals is done by men alone.

The rice agriculture of the lowlands differs from the above mainly in the strict taboo against women ploughing. The back-breaking job of transplanting is done mainly by women, but is not restricted to them as it is in caste society. Weeding is exclusively a woman's job.

The care of livestock, in and around the home, is mainly women's work. Cattle and goats which have to be grazed, may be taken out by members of the *gwala* (cowherd) caste, who are paid to do this. Adivasi men's responsibility with regard to livestock is more or less restricted to feeding cattle before taking them to the fields for ploughing.

The considerably larger contribution of women to the family economy of these tribes is clear from the above brief account. Of course over and above the contribution to "production" we must add the contribution to "domestic work". Adding the two together will show that women perform a substantial majority of the family labour. A study of tribes in Ganjam and Kalahandi districts of Orissa brought out the differences in the labour contribution of men and women to

the major "production" activities. We reproduce the table below.

Average labour days spent by women and men*

Type of work	*Women*	*Men*
Shifting cultivation	213.57	96.88
Wage labour	52.14	106.92
Firewood collection	135.12	61.57
Other forest produce	108.09	90.26
Others	11.33	63.09

Source: Fernandes and Menon, 1987, 84

* These are not humandays because they spend four to six hours a day on these activities for the average number of days given here.

Along with the considerably larger overall contribution of women to family labour, what does stand out is that in gathering activities there is more sharing and a less-strict division of labour than exists in the case of agriculture, particularly plough agriculture.

Further, the overall burden of labour is so much more on women, that it is only men who have the necessary leisure time to relax in the evenings, participate in politics, or learn a skill,etc. Unmarried girls may get some time off, but not married women. For unmarried girls too the burden of housework is very heavy and they are not exempt from it even when they are students. About the Oraons in Jashpur tehsil of Raigarh district, it has been reported that when boys and girls come home for the vacations, the boys have little work to do and can spend their time studying or playing with friends. Girls, on the other hand, have to fully participate in housework, and get little time for either study or relaxation. They usually end up losing weight in the vacation period. (Reported by Sr. Mercy of Daru Pisa, Jashpur.)

TABOOS

The division of labour is accompanied by a number of taboos for women. The asymmetric nature of the taboos, for there are no

corresponding taboos for men, shows that they are meant to establish an unequal ordering, a definite hierarchy in the family. We will first look at the taboos related to various aspects of production and then at those related to religion.

The taboos among the various tribes are very similar, though there are some differences. The prohibition on ploughing is universal. But there are variations with regard to touching a plough. Among the Ho and Munda a woman must not even touch the plough. Mere accidental touching of the plough can be a matter taken up by the village panchayat. Among the Ho and Munda, so as to minimize the chances of accidentally touching the plough, it is kept outside the house. Sachhidanand mentions an incident when a man, in the absence of his wife, took his crying baby girl on his hip while he was ploughing. "For this (indirect) female 'touch' of the plough he was taken to task." (1979) Among the Santhal, Oraon and Kharia there is no taboo against women touching the plough. They can and often do carry the plough (on their heads though not on their shoulders) to the field. But they must not touch a yoked plough. There are a number of other prohibitions related to daily production. Santhal, and other tribal women cannot thatch a roof or use a leveller. "They may not shoot arrows, use a razor, chisel holes, strike an axe or fish with line and hook. They cannot weave cloth or string a cot." (Archer, 1984, 28)

Among the Munda there is no prohibition against women touching weapons or using them—though they must not step over them. (a similar stepping over weapons taboo is mentioned by Leacock 1981.) But all the other tribes have prohibitions on women handling some or all weapons. Among the Santhal, the crucial bow and arrow is prohibited to women. It is only on the occasion of the ritual, *jani shikar* (women's hunt) which takes place once in twelve years that women are allowed to handle the weapons. Among the Santhal,on the occasion of a wedding too, women dance with weapons. Wearing of "male" clothes or playing "male" instruments is prohibited for women in all the tribes. Again, it is only on the occasion of *jani shikar* that women are permitted to wear male clothes.

In ritual matters there are very strong prohibitions with regard to women. They cannot partake of the sacrificial meat offered to the family spirits *(bonga)*. They normally see to the preparation of the puja materials. But they are debarred from sacrificing animals as well as from witnessing the sacrifice. (Archer, 1983, 129) They can assist in certain ceremonies but can only share certain portions of the

sacrificial meat, that is, other than the head, which is the most valued part of the meat. When there is no adult male in the family, a woman may herself perform the puja. If there is no adult male in the *pahan's* lineage, a woman (the widow of the *pahan*) may function as *pahan*, though a man substitutes for her in the actual rituals. The prohibition against women eating the head of sacrificed animals extends, at least in the case of the Santhal, to all animals that are hunted. (mentioned by a Santhal woman at the Gomia workshop.)

What do these various taboos mean? Clearly, they are meant to enforce a particular pattern of behaviour, one that is unlikely to have existed before the taboo came into force. Indeed, if such a pattern of behaviour had already "naturally" come into being, then a taboo would not be needed.

Marshal Sahlins held taboos to be "an integral part of the determination of such categories as 'chief', 'commoner', 'men' or 'women'." Further, "Constituting the social nature of persons and groups, tabu is itself the principle of these distinctions. For the same reason, tabu is never a simple reflection upon practice; it is in the order of practice, as also the organization of it." (1981, 51)

Taboos certainly establish the social nature of "women" and "men". But is there an ordering, a hierarchy implicit in the taboos? Or, are they merely a way of enforcing behaviour that is convenient to society, merely the administration of things, like modern-day traffic rules and regulations?

Leacock held that some taboos, at least, are merely a matter of administrative convenience and do not reflect rank. She mentions the taboo against Chipewyan menstruating women stepping over a trap or fishing site. (1981, 168)

> Since it hardly makes good sense to risk dripping blood on a trap, this was possibly a practical measure that was later irrationally extended, in the Chipewyan case, to eating parts of an animal's head or crossing a trail where these have been carried. Good manners that organize space and allow privacy in close living are commonly ritualized as taboos. For instance, to step over a sleeping person may bring illness or bad luck, but surely the practice preceded the sanction. Why not with menstrual taboos as well? I am not arguing the original rationality of all ritual practices, but rather that common-sense explanations should not automatically be ruled out. (1981, 168)

It is interesting to note that taboos among Jharkhandi tribes are

asymmetrical, in that the same prohibitions do not exist for men, as do for women. Second, taboos regarding production relate to key (core) production activities—roofing, ploughing, levelling, weaving, etc. With women contributing such a major part of even what is regarded as "production" labour, what the taboos on roofing, ploughing, etc., ensure is that women have to remain dependent on men for these core production activities. Control of these ensures, or serves to legitimize, male control of the production process. The taboos are related to hierarchic control, and are not merely instruments of neutral administration.

Third, the taboos institutionalize formal structures of authority. The authority of the male head is no longer informal, but is derived from a ritual structure of relation to the family, and clan spirits. Those who can relate to these spirits *(bongas)* through prayer and through partaking of the sacrificed animal, the men, are the ones who in themselves embody the family or the lineage. The ritual order is also the social (not natural) order.

Fourth, the taboos also ensure privileged access to the most prestigious goods—the heads of sacrificed or hunted animals. Whether they are actually superior foods does not matter; they have the *status* of superior foods. And access to such foods is restricted to men. While this may not be important in terms of the actual distribution of consumption, such a taboo does point to the prevalence of privileged and underprivileged access to consumption.

Fifth, taboos against women handling arms both show that there was quite likely a time when women had equal access to arms and that, with the taboo, arms become a matter of privileged (male) access. One of the defining characteristics of tribal society is that arms are not restricted to a particular class, for example, of slave owners or upper castes. But there is a restricton within tribal society—that the arms will be borne by men alone. This itself is a form of class prohibiton. As Chevillard and Leconte point out, "Differential access to arms always reflects class relations." (1986, 92)

The taboo on bearing arms is accompanied by the ritual inversion of this relationship on the specified occasion of *jani shikar*. Ranajit Guha (1983) discussing inversions, points out that they do not negate the basic relation, rather they reinforce it by allowing for its ritual rupture. That is certainly true in the case of *jani shikar*. But what is important to note here is, first, that the existence of the taboo points to the likely existence of a prior practice whereby women did, in fact,

participate in the forbidden activity. Had they not done so, it seems unlikely that there would have been any need to enforce a prohibition. A taboo definitely points to the necessity of having to change an existing pattern of behaviour. Second, the ritual inversion also shows that the persons concerned (women in this case) have some familiarity with the forbidden activity—reinforcing the point that they must have earlier participated in it. The *jani shikar* is not a real shikar, in that it is domestic animals that are hunted. But to hunt these animals, using weapons that they are otherwise forbidden to touch, must mean that the women are to some extent familiar with the handling of these weapons.

The taboos discussed above refer to production, the ritual order and the political order (arms). Menstrual and such similar taboos will be discussed later. But the key taboos that we have looked at, do certainly play an important role in establishing and maintaining women in a subordinate position. These are justified in terms of certain religious beliefs—for instance, that the family spirits *(bongas)* reside in the roof of a house, and they would not take kindly to a woman walking on them. But why should only women walking on them anger the *bongas*, and not men walking on them? Because it is men who represent the family and not women. In one way or another, the matter is related to the order of authority in the family, an authority that is formalized by the superior relation to the family spirits. Whether the taboo reflects the practice, or is in the practice (as Sahlins holds) is not of consequence in ascertaining that the taboos establish and maintain a particular social order. They are in no way merely administrative devices.

INCOME AND CONSUMPTION

Having looked at the division of labour in the various activities, we now need to turn our attention to the manner in which the product of labour is controlled and distributed within the family. For this, it is important to examine control over income, decision-making about expenditure and patterns of consumption, all of which will reveal the structures of authority within the family.

The produce of hunting is distributed in a manner reminiscent of the formalized sharing—with definite portions being assigned to different participants—that is found among the Birhor. In the event

of collective hunting (which is the norm), because hunting is essentially confined to ritual occasions, the animals are shared out in very definite portions among all the participants. (Archer, 1984, 119, gives a deailed account of the rules of sharing the product of the hunt.) Hunting, however, does not play a significant part in the economic life of the adivasis. It has more ritual than economic siginificance. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the rules are similar to those prevailing where hunting has a substantial economic role.

In looking at the control over income, a broad distinction needs to be made between the produce of the field and income from gathering. Those products of gathering that are not consumed by the family are exchanged, either for cash or for other goods. As we saw in the case of the Birhor, women sell or exchange rope and other goods in the villages. They decide about the manner in which the income is to be spent on the basis of the family's needs. When we come to the agriculturist tribes, which are in effect agriculturist-cum-gatherer tribes, the most obvious change is that land, the major instrument of production is under exclusive male ownership. The land system and its variations will be discussed later. At this point, we should note that male ownership of the land is reflected, at the level of income, in the male right over the produce of the land and over income as a whole. This right was tempered by a system of women actually managing the expenditure of income. Joint decisions on major expenditure was the earlier norm. This, however, has now been replaced by the man taking whatever he desires for his own consumption out of the income. (mentioned by Rose Kerketta.)

There are important variations in this general system. Among the Munda, grain is stored in rope-bins (called *mora*). Making the bins, storing the grain in them and taking it out, even for day-to-day use, is (among tradtional Mundas), the exclusive right of the man even today. This right belongs to the head of the family alone, and not even to any other man. (mentioned by Alexandra Bork and other activists of JKD from Gumla.) In the most traditional families this is so strictly followed that, if the man is not around or otherwise unavailable to take out the grain, the wife will borrow grain from the neighbours, but will not touch the *mora*. When a man goes out for a few days, he will take out the necessary quantity of grain before leaving.

As far as income from the sale of forest produce is concerned, one can observe at the market places that while men and women both sell produce, the man will usually hand over (after keeping what he

decides to spend on liquor, etc.) the cash to his wife. The woman does the actual spending in the market, including deciding on the goods to be bought. That which she may buy for herself out of this income from forest produce does not require prior approval of, or discussion with, her husband. At the end of the day, on returning home, however, the woman has to give an account of expenses to her husband and also has to hand over any remaining cash. Further, if any grain is to be sold in order to buy household goods, say, for instance, a sari for the woman, this requires explicit approval by the male head of the household.

The sole authority over the *mora* has in many cases now become merely formal—the male head will take out grain on the first occasion, but not subsequently. But account-giving by the woman and handing over of cash surplus to the man continue. Out of the income from gathering, the woman can still decide her expenditure on the basis of her own consumption requirements.

This system of formal control over different parts of the income is very similar to that analysed by Ann Whitehead for the Kusasi of North Ghana. (1981 and 1984) "No other member of the household, except the head, may look or reach inside the granary." (1981, 104) Cash income is wholly owned by the individual and "no other person has rights to it." (1984, 1850) But, of course, formal rights are not everything.

> The right of individuals to spend their money how they like is tempered by the practice of and value placed on 'helping others'. The other household members, close kin, or needy neighbours and political allies 'beg' for help. I observed differences in being able to hold out against such claims. It is much easier for a household head, married man, senior wife, unmarried son or brother, and junior wives and daughters, in that descending order, to hold onto their income. This order reflects the generalised status hierarchy within the complex Kusasi household. (1984, 185)

In Jharkhand, the ideology of "helping others" does not play a crucial role in setting limits within which income is spent. More important is the responsibility of women in running the home and feeding the children. A man can often ignore household responsibilities and spend a good part of his income on liquor. Of course, his social standing will then suffer. It would, however, be virtually impossible for a woman to similarly neglect her familial responsibilities.

The woman would be expected in such as case to put in extra effort and use her income to keep the family going and feed the children. The responsibility of providing for the family, finally restricts the actual freedom of a woman to spend her income as she wishes.

The system of women deciding on expenditure from their non-agricultural labour is itself under increasing attack. Men insist on taking as much of the overall earnings as they want, particularly in cases where they drink heavily. This appropriation of the woman's income, however, is still not done as a matter of course and men often have to resort to beating up the woman to get hold of her money. This should be contrasted with the situation in caste society, where even among the lowest castes, the men would, as of right, control the manner in which the entire income of the family is spent. They would not need to beat up the women in order to take their earnings from them.

Hoffman had summarized the Munda and Kharia system of income control as follows: "All the earnings, whether in kind or specie, of the various members of the family, belong by right to him, as long as they abide with him. At his death his widow replaces him and directs everything in the house as he did himself." (Hoffman, 2333). In practice, there were joint decisions on major expenses and women had some autonomy in deciding on expenses from their own cash earnings. The surplus, if any, vested entirely with the man.

Unmarried girls had some privileges with regard to income. In all the tribes there was and is a system of leaving some stalks of rice, etc., behind on the fields, for unmarried girls to collect. The income from this grain was theirs entirely, as also any earnings from their own gathering of forest produce. Whatever income they earned, they could spend on their own needs, or in whichever manner they wished. Such freedom, however, only existed for unmarried girls.

Among the Santhal there seem to be more definite rights for women, even married women. Income from forest produce accrues entirely to the person who collects and sells the produce. Men, women and children thus have their own respective incomes from this sale. Manas Sarkar (JKD activist from Midnapore-Singhbhum) mentions an incident where cashew nuts had been gathered and dried separately by a man and his wife. For some reason, the woman had gone away from home. The nuts picked by her thus remained unsold. When asked why they were not being sold, the father-in-law replied

that they belonged to the *babu* (daughter-in-law). Thus, income from gathering or, for that matter, from wage-labour, accrues to the person who performs the labour, man, woman or child. Further, in the overall family expenditure, including that from the produce of the field, there is no restriction on women taking grain from the *mora*. Men and women can take grain, but both have to render accounts to the other. (mentioned by Santhal women from Hazaribagh and Santhal Parganas at Gomia workshop.)

Among the Oraon, while in some parts (around Ranchi) women can keep the money from the sale of forest produce, in others, such as Jashpur in Madhya Pradesh, they cannot do so. In fact, in a significant departure from the tribal system, Oraon women in Jashpur do not do the marketing. A similar situation exists with the Kherwar in Palamu. The women no longer do the marketing and have no control over income from their own labour. Among the Korwa in the same areas of Palamu, however, women do the marketing and have some say in the expenditure of income.

Agricultural produce is thus subject to the strictest notions of male ownership and control, partly mitigated by consultations and joint decisions on spending, as in the case of the Santhal. Where income from gathering is concerned, there may be some measure of female autonomy, again best exemplified by the Santhal case, where whoever produces and sells has a right on that income. In a number of tribes this right over the income from gathering has been eroded, to the extent that in some, like the Kherwar, women no longer do the marketing. Some female control over income from gathering exists only in those cases where women do their own marketing.

In the Munda (and perhaps in the Kharia too) control over any surplus explicitly rests with the man, the head of the household. Among the Oraon of Jashpur or the Kherwar of Palamu, where income from gathering too does not accrue to women, there is no question of their having any direct relation to the surplus. Santhal women seem to have the greatest rights over the surplus from their own earnings—for, as mentioned, even by Bodding in the nineteenth century, "Women are to a certain extent permitted to own personal (i.e. movable) property. How far this went formerly, it is very difficult to have more than an opinion of. Nowadays, they own money, goods and cattle. *It is more than property on trust, they can dispose of it.*" (Troisi, VI, 4, emphasis added)

Ann Whitehead's analysis of Kusasi domestic budgets (1981, 105)

makes the point that the identical activity, of growing groundnuts, has different objectives for men and women. "Women, Kusasi say, grow groundnut to feed their children in the hungry season. Men farm to get cash." This cash is not used to purchase the staple food "which is part and parcel of their obligations as household head or as husband, nor normally for many other subsistence items." As a result, "It is for men then, that an effectual and highly important boundary is drawn between money and subsistence."

In the Jharkhand situation, even where tribes such as the Santhal, where women have the greatest extent of control over expenditure from their income are concerned, some factors point to a similar situation. In the first place, to anticipate something that will be discussed in the next section, men do have growing privileges in consumption. Secondly, accumulation, which is mainly in the form of increasing land under cultivation, is entirely under the control of men. And, as pointed out earlier, in the last analysis, it is the woman's responsibility to see that the family is fed. Whether it is related to non-subsistence consumption as of alcohol, or to accumulation, men may draw "an effectual and highly important conceptual boundary . . . between money and subsistence." How effectual this boundary actually is, depends on the extent to which there is a surplus. Where all the cash income is not sufficient for subsistence, such a boundary will hardly exist. But, where there is a surplus, it is men's control over the domestic budget that will increase.

Before analysing property rights in further detail, we need to first look at the manner of consumption.

CONSUMPTION

Rules of precedence in eating, prohibitions with regard to certain foods and norms about left-overs together determine privileges in food consumption. For the Mundas, S.C.Roy mentions that, "As in Hindu families, the female members of the Munda's family will not sit down to eat before the men have finished their meals." (1912, 218) A similar rule prevails among the Oraon. Among the Santhal too, when both are at home, the man will usually eat first. But quite frequently they will eat together. Common to all the tribes is the absence of any norm that the woman must wait for her husband and even if he is late, eat only after he has finished. Further, when both are at home, if the

woman has to go out first on work, she will eat before her husband.

Archer (1984) mentions Santhal rules about eating left-overs. This is prohibited for all those who are not allowed to eat from the same plate. Husband and wife can neither eat from the same plate nor eat each other's left-overs. Generally, the rule is that the younger generation can take the left-overs of the older. Archer says about these rules, "They imply an order of honour within the family. They stress the respect due to seniority and age. They emphasise the authority of men. Moreover by excluding certain relations from the intimacy of common eating [i.e. from the same plate] they reinforce the tribal code of behaviour." (1984, 534-35) The rules mentioned do not, however, contain anything that emphasizes the authority of men. The only rule that seems related to such authority is that if man and wife eat together from the same plate, then the man is forever debarred from making sacrifices to the *bongas*. "He has become a woman." (534) Had male authority been emphasized we would expect something like the caste Hindu rule which makes it virtually compulsory for a man to leave some food on his plate for his wife to eat.

With regard to sacrificed animals, women are uniformly prohibited from eating the head. Among the Santhal, this extends to all animals that are acquired by hunting, but not to domesticated animals. What this shows is the beginning of restrictions on access to privileged foods, like superior animal protein. Kolean Haram in the nineteenth century, put the Santhal practice with regard to consumption of food as follows: "The women eat last. They rarely eat meat." (Archer, 1984, 154)

The beginnings of privileged access to superior conumption goods is further extended in the modern situation. Items like radios, wristwatches and bicycles are almost entirely the preserve of men. For instance, it can be noticed at the Bokaro Steel Plant that while both tribal men and women work as contract labourers, when a bicycle can be afforded, it is purchased only for the men. The women continue to walk many kilometres to and from work. The reason for this is certainly not that women will not ride bicycles—women in the same city working for the Hindustan Steelworks Construction Limited (HSCL) who were given bicycles by the company, on the occasion of some anniversary, regularly ride them to and from work and wherever else they have to go. Differences in access are very marked in the case of education. Male education is far in advance of female education.

The absence of systematic discrimination against females in con-

sumption is reflected in the favourable sex ratio of these tribes. But the growth of such discrimination is also reflected in the falling sex ratio, a ratio that, however, is still favourable to females.

There is some evidence (other than the indirect one of a favourable sex ratio) to show that women were not discriminated against in the matter of consumption of basic foods. Hoffman, in the early part of this century, made a detailed calculation of the amount of food required by an adivasi family. "Careful inquiries among the people on this matter gave the following results. For one full and one secondary meal a day men require 14 chataks of rice. Women, I have been told, require 16 chataks, i.e., 1 seer of rice, because beside the duties of maternity and the housework, they have their full share of field work." (1950, 2939-40) Hoffman was reporting the results of his inquiries among the people, and his statements do show that a higher food consumption for women was accepted as the norm. This should be contrasted with the patriarchal norm embodied in minimum wage calculations for workers, where the government explicitly assumes that women need only 80 per cent of men's consumption.

6

Land Systems

The land systems of the different adivasi tribes of Jharkhand show considerable variation among themselves. They can, however, be grouped under two large heads—the communal landownership of the Kolarian tribes (Munda, Santhal and Ho) and the private property in land "at least as far as their chiefs were concerned" (Singh, 1987, 63) of the Cheros and Gonds. Here, since we are not concerned with the Cheros and Gonds, we need to look mainly at the communal land system and its variants.

While it is necessary to also look at the historical evolution of this system, this is a difficult task as there is no written material on its early history, i.e. the pre-Mughal period. Whatever analyses exist—whether by Dalton (1960), S.C.Roy (1970), Hoffman (1950) or, more recently, K.S.Singh (1987) and B.P.Kesari (1979)—are a combination of ethnographic material and an interpretation of myth. Despite the paucity of material, however, what has helped in the historical reconstruction is the fact that some versions of the communal land system survived at the time that the first colonial administrators (like Dalton and Wilkinson) and later missionaries, like Skesfrud, Bodding and Hoffman, and early Indian anthropologists, like S.C.Roy, began writing accounts of the area. Even today some forms of communal land ownership still survive, making it easier for us to understand the nature of the land system.

In looking at the historical process, it is necessary to guard against the usual biased assumption that these are peoples who lack a history, at least until the colonial period. The suvival of communal land systems, too, does not mean that the area and the peoples had no history. The past of pre-class society is also history. Indeed, it is particularly important to uncover the historical processes at work and lay bare the contradictions of these pre-class societies. Such an analysis will yield valuable insights into the manner in which classes, property, the state and patriarchy were all formed.

COMMUNAL LAND SYSTEMS

Archer (1984) in describing the Santhal system of land ownership characterized it as "socialism" and that too "as embodied in the English modern state"! (25) What he described, however, was neither socialism, nor the land system of the modern English state, but a system of clan, or lineage (i.e. local branch of a clan) ownership of village land.

At the founding of a Santhal village, a Santhal male received land not by individual seizure but by village decision. When the family had brought the land under cultivation, he acquired a permanent right to be in possession. Exchange with another Santhal was only possible with the approval of the village. He could not transfer the land out of his family and if he died without any heirs or left the village, the land went back to the village stock. (Archer, 1984, 25)

S.C.Roy (1912) held that the Mundas had a system of periodic redistribution of the village lands among the various families. This was contested by Hoffman (1950) who could find no trace of such a redistribution. But for the Santhals, it was mentioned by Kolean Guru in 1877, as recorded by the Norwegian missionary Skesfrud (Chattopadhyay, 1949) that all Santhals annually gave up the land to the headman at the *Maghe Sim Parab* festival and then got it back a few days later. This practice had become symbolic even at that time and later died out altogether. This ritual reinforces the notion that the land belonged to the village community. A family possessed land only by virtue of being a member of this community, i.e. a member of the agnatically related families descended from the reclaimers of the soil.

Land could only be possessed by the family that reclaimed it. There was, however, no distinction between the various families that did do so, except for the few privileges of the family of the village headman (*manjhi* among the Santhals). There was a notion of the superior rights of the "original reclaimers" *(khuntkattidars)*, as against the corresponding inferior position of all subsequent reclaimers. This distinction was present amongst the Santhal, (Chattopadhyay, 1949, 72) but it is chiefly among the Munda and Ho that there arose a land system built on the basis of the superior rights of the original reclaimers of the land. The *khuntkatti* system is also encountered in Palamu, Rohtas and Khond Mahals. (Singh, 1978, 30)

The classic account of the Mundari *khuntkatti* system is that of Hoffman. This Jesuit missionary had seen the Birsa-led *ulgulan* (rebellion) in the Khunti area (of Ranchi distirct), which was and still

is the heart of the Mundari *khuntkatti* system. In the aftermath of the Munda rebellion, Hoffman submitted a memorandum to the colonial government, outlining the features of the system and making out a strong case for why it needed to be treated differently from land in, say, Bihar. It was on the basis of this memorandum that the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (hereafter CNT Act) was amended to provide partial protection to the *khuntaktti* land system, recognizing the non-transferability of land in this system and also the rights of the village community over both agricultural land and forests.(The forest system will be analysed separately.)

In the Mundari *khuntkatti* village there are three clear sections of people. First, the *khuntkattidars* or the descendants of the original settlers; second, the other Munda peasants, called *raiyats* or *praja* (who, as pointed out by Hoffman and K.S.Singh and also seen in field investigations in Maranghada area, are usually relatives on the female side); and, third, the non-adivasi, subsidiary artisan castes.

The *khuntkatti* system is a kind of corporate ownership of the descendants of the supposed original settlers of the land. "The khuntkattidars are the descendants in the male line of the original founders of the village. ... As a group they are the owners of the whole of the area included in the village boundaries . . . " (Hoffman, 1950, 2389) Hoffman notes that the cultivated lands are not held in common and that "no trace is found of the existence of equalization of shares or periodic redistribution of lands." (2389) Corporate ownership existed then in the sense that there could no transfer out of the lineage and any settling of members of other clans could only be with the permission of the *khuntkattidars* as a group. The uncultivated lands were held in common, but any individual *khuntkattidar* could reclaim them for cultivation. It does not seem that such reclamation by a *khuntkattidar* required village permission, as Archer mentions in the case of the Santhal. In Singhbhum, the *khuntkattidars* (under the CNT Act) did not have the right to reclaim forest or uncultivated land. (Singh, 1978, 31)

The Mundas, who did not belong to the *khuntkatti* lineage, were brought in to extend cultivation. They were in no sense co-owners of the village. They could stay only so long as they accepted the domination of the *khuntkattidars*. As far as land was concerned, they could bring under cultivation only such lands as might, from time to time, be given to them.

J.C.Reid, who prepared the *Final Report of the Survey and Settle-*

ment Operations, 1902-1910, mentions that, "Under-raiyats [ie. non-*khuntkattidar* Mundas] are with few exceptions mere tenants-at-will. There is no recognized limit to the enhancement of their rent; and they are liable to ejectment for refusing to agree to enhancement." (70) It was from the *praja* that the *khuntkattidars* realized the fixed rent (tribute, rather than rent) they had to pay to the superior, the Chotanagpur Raja. The position of the *praja* was not as totally insecure as the above account may suggest. They did acquire occupancy, but not ownership, rights in some of the land, (*korkar* lands). Yet their position was and is insecure. They can remain only with the consent of the *khuntkattidars*. The non-*khuntkattidars* are still liable to be ejected. (In Satagada village of Maranghada Block, Ranchi District for example, a Munda non-*khuntkattidar* has had to leave the village and go to Nicobar; his wife and children remain in the village, but have to keep a low profile.) The male children of such a non-*khuntkattidar* do not inherit their father's possession of the land as a matter of course—rather, any such inheritance has to be approved by the village.

The third section of the village, the artisan castes, are not really agriculturists. Formerly, along with their artisanal activities, they may have also carried on some gathering of forest products. Agriculture was a subsidiary activity. But even in the present there are transfers of land to artisans. (Singh, 1978, 32)

Over the centuries relations between the village community and the outside world have changed, and this has resulted in change within the village community as well. It is likely that at some distant time the form of organization above the village was restricted to that of a group of villages—the *parha*. This included the headmen of the various villages comprising the *parha*, often a group of twelve villages. Among the Ho, who never accepted the overlordship of the Chotanagpur Raj, the *parha* chief was known as the *manki*; while among the Munda, who did accept the Chotanagpur overlordship, the *parha* chief was known by the more Hinduized title of *parha* raja. The Santhal too had a form of inter-village council, composed of the headmen of the villages concerned. Usually a group of some 20 to 30 villages was organized as a pargana. (a non-Santhali word, Archer, 1984, 15)

Over and above the village and pargana council, the Santhals had an institution which was the final authority in all matters—this was the general assembly of males on the occasion of the annual hunt.

The *lo bir sendra*, or "hunt in the burnt forest" is given this name "as the jungle is fired in March to clear the undergrowth" and "we burn offences there". Archer reports it being said that originally there was only one hunt for the whole tribe, but now every region has a hunt of its own.(1984, 14) The master of the hunt is chosen for the occasion and is the highest official only for the period of the hunt—just as one would expect in actual hunting, where the chief could be chosen on the basis of ability. The general assembly of all males in the hunt is the final authority in Santhal society.

Neither the Santhal nor the Ho seem to have either developed a territorial kingship on their own, or succumbed to the authority of one. Hoffman points out that the Ho, unlike the Munda and the Oraon, do not have any tradition about the formation of the Chotanagpur Raj. As late as the eighteenth century they defeated attempts by the Raja of Singhbhum to subjugate them. It was only with the advent of the British, that they were defeated by the force under Col.Wilkinson. (Hofffman, 1950, 1764-1768) By the famous Wilkinson rules, the *mankis* and *mundas* were accepted as direct agents of the colonial government. The village structure was kept largely intact—with, of course, the powers of the *mankis* and *mundas* being reinforced by their direct relation to the colonial administration. In course of time some *mankis* arrogated to themselves the position of proprietors of the village. (Mahapatra, 1989, 43) But even with that it was a partial overlordship, restricted by the power of the community and the continuing kinship ties. The policy followed in the case of the Santhals, in what became the Santhal Parganas, was more or less similar to the above.

In the region of the Chotanagpur Raj developments were somewhat different. Legend has it that the Chotanagpur Raj of the Nagbanshis was established sometime in the 6th-7th century A.D. While Dalton, S.C.Roy and others held that the Chotanagpur Raj was an endogenous development of Munda society, K.S.Singh argues that the Nagbanshi Raj was an exogenous development.

> The establishment of the Chotanagpur Raj marked the transition from the clan-based parhas to territorial kingship. It is interesting to note in this connection what while state formation was an endogenous process in the case of the Gonds and Cheros, both being Dravidian tribes, it was exogenous to the Mundas or Santhals who were Kolarian tribes. A reason for this could be the fact that the Kolarian tribes were continuously moving from place to place as attested by

> their legends while the Dravidian tribes had settled down and developed the technology of settled agriculture. The Kolarian tribes had a land system based on the concept of communal ownership while the Gonds and Cheros had developed a kind of private property in land as far as their chiefs were concerned. The Nagbanshis belonged to the Dravidian group.(1987, 63)

The Munda villages now had to pay a tribute, *chanda* as it was (and is) called, to the Chotanagpur Raj. This was a fixed amount that, perhaps at one time, bore some relation to the land cultivated, but as more and more land was brought under cultivation, it ceased to have any such relation. The tribute was in kind, cash and in military service. The Mundas as privileged peasants were allowed to pay this *chanda* by means of collections from the subordinate lineages of the *prajas.* The Nagabanshi legend has it that the ". . . 'Bhuinhar'. . . takes 'dam our kam' [money and labour] from the Prajas on account of the Maharaja." (Singh, 1987, 59) Both S.C.Roy (1946) and Hoffman (1950) have argued that the *chanda* did not correspond to rent. According to Roy, ". . . these 'rents' were originally fixed without any reference to the yield of the holding, [which] *at no period of their history represented a certain proportion of the produce, or of its money value. . . "* (1946, 156, emphasis in original)

Roy himself terms *chanda* as "tribute rent". Tribute it certainly was, as also a forerunner of rent, a manner of acknowledging the overlordship of a superior. But, as distinguished from the situation of rent proper, the superior (the Raja of Chotanagpur) had, in this case, no claim over the village lands. The village community under the Raja remained undisturbed, with only a portion (although exactly what the portion was is difficult to say) of the surplus being handed over to the superior.

Initially, this superior represented the community itself, a higher community than that of the village or *parha.* It is perhaps this representation that accounts for the strong emphasis on the voluntary acceptance (even choice) of the Raja by the assembled representatives of the Munda clans in the myth of the origin of the Chotanagpur Raj. Further, the notion of choice of the superior by the assembled representatives, makes it likely that, at this stage, this superior was more in the nature of a chief than a king. Though the term used is the same "Chotanagpur Raj", it may well have undergone a change of meaning from chief to king. The notion of a superior to whom tribute was paid was well established among the Munda and

Oraon (though not so, perhaps, among the Ho and the Santhal). At the same time, the rights of the village community over the land, agricultural and forest, were also equally well established.

The tribute itself was not much. K.S.Singh says that "The tribals were kept out of the process of surplus generation." (68) There was no standing army and attendant court—which is what explains the low level of tribute extracted from the Munda villages. In any case, in the villages, the burden of paying this tribute fell on the families of the subordinate lineages. This structure of a small tribute, in kind and in labour, paid by the adivasi, especially Munda, villages seems to have continued well into the seventeenth century. At the time of Akbar, the Chotanagpur Raja was defeated and turned into a feudatory, and was forced to pay a tribute to the Emperor. Alongside, some extent of "Sanskritzation" accompanied the then-raja's long imprisonment. With this, consumption at the court increased. Tribute to the Mughal empire and the newly-established consumption standards of the court both demanded higher revenue from the peasants, adivasis and others. The threat to the rights of the village community came once the Raja of Chotanagpur became a vassal to the Mughal empire. The increased tribute required new methods of collection and an erosion of the community's rights. The tribute extracted from the tribal communities was no longer related to the reproduction of the community. Rather, it was mainly taken out of the region to be used by the rulers of Delhi. Some amount of expansion of the court expenses of the Chotanagpur raj followed "Sanskritization". Together, these changes could mean a change from chiefdom to kingship.

There was still no standing army. But the ruling Nagbanshis employed some other central Indian communities such as the Rautias, as their militia. (This may be the root of the continuing contradictions between Mundas and Rautias.)

The ruling Nagbanshis encouraged settled agriculture as a means of producing a surplus. The Oraons, who claim to have brought settled agrculture to Chotangapur, inhabited the heart of the Chotanagpur raj. Besides them the Mahtos grew in importance as they became virtually full-fledged agriculturists (unlike the Munda-Ho-Santhal agriculturist-cum-gatherers). The Mahtos themselves accumulated and also provided the major surplus for the Chotanagpur raj. While K.S.Singh holds that they are Kurmis who were encouraged by the Nagbanshis to settle in Chotanagpur, it is possible (as is now argued by the Mahtos) that they may have been an indigenous

community that developed into full-fledged agriculturists, and in the process lost some of their earlier tribal traits, while at the same time holding on to others.

It is from this time that *jagirs* were established, as areas were farmed out for collecting the necessary tribute. Some lands were taken over from the villages as crown lands, *rajhas*, while others were taken over from the old *majhi* (headman) lands and turned into *majhihas*, not any longer under the *majhis* but under the new *jagirdars*. The rights of the orginal settlers over the whole village, including its forests, were abolished. In its place there only remained the privileged tenure of the individual families. The rents to be paid by these privileged peasants, *bhuinhars*, were more or less fixed. This was the beginning of the breakdown of the *khuntkatti* system of ownership, and its replacement by individual ownership. In the place of the community there were now individual peasants. This was the transition from community or tribe, to peasant, brought about under the pressure of increased tribute to the Mughal raj. This transition, however, was confined to the area around and north of Ranchi, largely Oraon territory. The heart of Munda territory to the southwest, as well as the Ho territory were not affected.

An idea of the extent of communal land systems can be gleaned from the surveys of the British period. Prabhu Mahapatra has calculated that the various community forms covered, in the twentieth century, some 40 per cent of the villages in Ranchi, 60 per cent of those in Singhbhum and 33 per cent in Manbhum (i.e. Dhanbad and Purulia). By contrast, in the western and northern parts of Chotanagpur, such forms of community ownership existed in only 55 out of 3985 villages in Palamu and in 412 out of 7000 in Hazaribagh. All these villages in Hazaribagh were concentrated in the southeastern portion of the district, adjacent to Ranchi. (Mahapatra, 1989, 14-15)

TRIBUTE AND FEUDALISM

There has been a long debate about the nature of various production relations all of which use pressures "other than economic" for extracting the surplus. While some have insisted on the uniqueness of the "Asiatic mode of production", (Wittfogel and Marvin Harris) others have equally denied that the term "feudalism" can be used to describe the situation that obtained in India (Harbans Mukhia and the debate

that followed). Samir Amin has sought to encompass feudalism within a broader category of "tributary mode of production".

Marx, in an important passage, explicitly unites various kinds of relations involving the use of "other than economic pressure" for extracting surplus.

> It is furthermore evident that in all forms in which the direct labourer remains the 'possessor' of the means of production and labour conditions necessary for the production of his own means of subsistence, the property relationship must simultaneously appear as a direct relation of lordship and servitude, so that the direct producer is not free; a lack of freedom which may be reduced from serfdom with enforced labour to a mere tributary relationship. (III, 1967, 790-91 in Wolf 1982, 80)

Both serfdom with enforced labour and tribute-paying, are variants of exploitation by "other than economic pressure". Samir Amin has called this the tributary mode of production. Within this, he hypothesizes that "the primitive feudal mode evolved toward the tributary mode; the tributary mode is not the exception but the general rule and the feudal mode is a particular and exceptional variant of the tributary set." (1980, 62)

In the case of Jharkhand the opposite can be observed: first, a tributary relationship, representing to an extent the conditions of reproduction of the community itself; second, the intensification of the tributary relationship, with part of the surplus flowing out to the rulers of Delhi; and then, the transformation of land relations at the village level, limiting the rights of the community, and enshrining the superior rights of the state.

In the establishment of class society in India (South Asia?) two broad stages can be identified. In the first stage ". . . the priests, warriors and administrators were entitled to the surplus in the form of taxes and gifts for services rendered. . . . " (R.S.Sharma, 1985, 179) This stage could be labelled that of a "tributary" system. It was broadly the period of the *varna* system.

From the time of the Gupta empire land grants became increasingly important. Along with the taxes paid to the raja or empire, the local feudals *(samants)* began to get larger share of the surplus as well as increasing control over the land. "Indian kings made land grants to get the taxes (surplus) collected. In their turn the grantees collected rents from their subject tenant-peasants who could be evicted and

even subjected to forced labour." (R.S.Sharma, 1985, 190) Besides subject tenant-peasants, there were also untouchable agricultural labourers. The artisan and service castes in *jajmani-balutedari* relations had defined jobs to perform, in return for shares of the agricultural crop.

It was in the early medieval period that the caste system was tightened up. (B.N.S.Yadav 1987, 204) And the establishment of untouchability as a characteristic of the caste system dates to about the second century A.D. (Dipankar Gupta 1985, 23) The establishment of the full-fledged caste system, the Indian (South Asian?) form of feudalism, does coinicide with the change from the earlier tribute paying system to the feudal system

The transition in Jharkhand follows a similar outline of two stages—first of tribute paying, and then, next, the establishment of superior rights of the rulers and the state over land, along with the concomitant changes in the position of the peasants. What we find is the tributary system evolving towards the feudal system, and not, as Amin hypothesizes, the other way around.

With British colonial rule, the changes that had been initiated in the northern part of Chotanagpur were intensified and then began to spread to other parts of the region. But this time, they met with considerable resistance from the relatively intact adivasi communities, Santhal, Ho, Munda and Bhumij.

COLONIAL RULE

In the first phase of colonial rule, marked by the rule of the East India Company, the primary objective of land policy was to maximize the revenue accruing to the Company. Revenue demands were increased, initially through the Temporary Settlements and then through the Permanent Settlement. The Raja of Chotanagpur was turned into a zamindar and the adivasi (and other) peasants into *raiyats*. With this the relations between the two (Raja and tribal peasants) changed. The land systems were also changed by the British—chiefly the land which had for ages remained unalienable and the collective property of the village community, was now made alienable. The higher revenue demands of the British could only be met by increased collection. For this more and more of the land was farmed out as *jagirs* to the *thikadars*. By the end of the colonial period, some 63 per cent

of the land was farmed out as *jagirs* to the *thikadars* and moneylenders. (Singh, 1987, 79)

These revenue farmers were to pay certain amounts to the zamindar. In turn, they could levy any amount at all on the "*raiyats*". Apart from revenue the *thikadars* and moneylenders, also levied unpaid labour *(begar)* and various cesses *(rakumat)*. The adivasi peasants, particularly the *khuntkattidars* and *bhuinhars*, who had been used to a fixed *chanda* were now faced with having to pay an increasing *malguzari*, land revenue. Hoffman pointed out that the "whole village did not pay as much or hardly ever more than what was now extracted from a single average ryot." (1950, 2938)

The zamindars and *thikadars* forcibly took over large parts of the fertile ricelands which had been created by the adivasi peasants. Often, some pretext such as the supposed failure to pay rent was used to justify the takeover. These *bakasht* lands were then cultivated with *begar* from the former owners of the land and others. Various kinds of cesses were levied. *Rakumats*, as they were called, were in addition to the rent and usually paid in kind. Goats, rice, oil, ghee and the like were demanded on every pretext, be it a wedding, a birth or a death. The adivasi peasants were also forced to pay such *rakumats* for celebrating various festivals, like Dussehra and Diwali, festivals that they themselves did not observe.

Failure to pay the revenue, or to meet the various cesses and demands for *begar* was met with dispossession. The nature of the relation of the adivasi peasants' to land had changed fundamentally. Land which had so far been the property of the village, in the alienable possession of the family, could now be taken out of the village community and owned by the *thikadar* or moneylender. The whole machinery of the state—the law-courts, police, and administration set up by the British, worked to secure the "rights" of the *thikadar* or moneylender against those of the adivasi peasants. Hoffman pointed out: ". . . most court decisions between 1890 and 1895 were given against the aborigines."(1950, 519) It was not the courts alone but the administration too that was entirely on the side of the *thikadars* and moneylenders. "The then Deputy Commissioner Col.Gordon was apparently convinced that the poor zamindars, as he put it, were the innocent victims of the obstinate Kols." (1950, 519)

In this general picture of growing indebtedness and dispossession, it is also likely that areas with continuing village community land systems, including the forests, were somewhat freer from debt. "Ob-

servers agreed on the situation of the Kolhan Government Estate (Singhbhum) where indebtedness was reported to be either completely missing or minimal." (Schwerin, 1978, 31) The undisputed right of the adivasis to clear forests and bring new lands into cultivation (*korkar* right as it was called) was considerably restricted by the new laws. What this meant was that the forest no longer belonged to the village, but to the zamindar. The zamindar had to be paid for bringing land into cultivation.

The combination of increased debt, takeover of good quality ricelands (*don* lands) by the zamindars and *thikadars* as *bakasht* and the restriction of the *korkar* right, all this combined to threaten the reproduction of the economy. The system of expansion, which was the way the needs of a growing population used to be met, became difficult. The place of expansion of agriculture was soon taken by migration, first seasonal and then of a longer, even permanent nature as the tea-gardens were opened up in Assam and Bengal. The destruction of the conditions of reproduction of the local economy was a key factor in forcing the adivasis to seek solutions in migration, thus pushing them into the hands of the labour contractors, the *horo akirinko*, or "sellers of men" as the Munda called them. (Hoffman, 1950, 156)

Faced with the continued denial of the possibilities of peacefully reproducing their economy, the adivasis, supported by other peasants and toilers in the region, responded to the destruction of their rights and the seizure of their lands by a series of insurrections. Initially, the Santhals responded to the revenue demands by migrating from Hazaribagh to what is now Santhal Parganas. But when the same demands of the moneylenders and revenue collectors were re-established, they fought back in an uprising.

While the hated *thikadars* and moneylenders were the invariable targets of the uprisings, the British were also identified as a key factor in the increased oppression of the adivasis, and an end to British rule was demanded. Initially, the uprisings sought to protect the special rights of the adivasi peasants, particularly their right to hold rent-free land, called *buinhari* land. But with the Sardari Larai of the Mundas, the demand changed to one for recognition of the system of communal land holdings, holdings that were inalienable.

These uprisings and their brutal suppression are a part of history and need not be repeated here. What needs to be noted is that their consequence was the passage of a number of special laws to take

account of some of the features of the adivasi land systems. These laws also showed that British colonial rule had passed on to a new stage of exploitation.

Rather than the outright plunder of land revenue, India was now needed as a source of raw materials and as a market. The Jharkhand region was not of much importance as a market. But it had an important role in the supply of raw materials for colonial production. Lac was one of the first products to be exported from the forests of Jharkhand. With the building of the railways, both timber and later coal, became important. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, iron ore from Jharkhand played a key role in the setting up of the Tata iron and steel factory.

These various raw materials were produced in different ways and placed different demands on the local economy. In the case of lac and other such "minor forest produce", as they are now known, the peasants themselves did the collecting and then sold the product to the traders, who were agents of the industrial buyers. Timber was cut by the local labourers, who worked for a wage under contractors. Coal, and later iron ore were mined by capitalist concerns, with most of the labour being brought in from outside the area. In this case, it was only the land that was needed and not the local labour.

Initially, in response to the uprisings, the British authorities were concerned to restrict the depradations of the zamindars, *thikadars* and moneylenders. It was only later, in the twentieth century, that they had to face the problem of acquiring land for mining. Through a series of laws and amendments to the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, two major land systems were recognized. The first was the *bhuinhari* and the second the *khuntkatti* system.

In the former, which was first legislated, the colonial authorities recognized the "individual tenure of the original reclaimers of the land." (Singh, 1983, 15) The rent of the *bhuinhari* lands was fixed, but initially there was no restriction on alienation. This had the opposite effect of making these *bhuinhari* lands even more valuable for the zamindars and *thikadars*. In this system there was no recognition of the right of the village to the forest and no notion of land held by the village in common. Forests were the property of the zamindar or the state. Collection of forest produce was allowed, but there was no right to reclaim forest land for agricultural purposes. With the growth of population the necessary expansion of the village economy was denied. This resulted in large-scale migration, accom-

plished with a large degree of coercion, but made possible by the restrictions on the right to turn forests into agricultural land.

It was only after the Birsaite Munda uprising at the turn of the century that the colonial authorities recognized the *khuntkatti* land system. By amendments to the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, the rights of the Mundari *khuntkattidars*, organized as a village community, to the village land and its forests were recognized. The right to the forests was only recognized for Mundari *khuntkattidars* in the region around Ranchi, which was the scene of the Munda uprising, while further south-east, in Singhbhum, these rights remained unrecognized.

For all adivasi lands restrictions were placed on the rights of alienation. By the 1908 amendment to the CNT Act tribal lands were made non-alienable. This applied not only to *khuntkatti* lands but to all tribal lands. Later, with growing pressure for "opening up" the tribal system to exploitation by zamindari-cum-mercantile interests, there was a loosening of these restrictions. As a first step, tribal lands were made alienable to other tribals. Later, as land was needed for coal mining in Dhanbad, tribal lands were made alienable with the "permission" of the administrative officials.

In the post-1947 period, these restrictions have been further loosened. Amendments have allowed various categories of transfer. And for "public" purposes tribal lands can be acquired with the permission of the relevant officials. The meaning of the term "public purpose" is so broad that it can be used to sanction virtually any land acquisition. Large areas of land, over and above those required for the intended industrial, mining or irrigation project are acquired. These lands are then given out to individuals, circumventing the restrictions on alienation of the CNT Act. At times, lands are taken over ostensibly for some project or the other, but the project is then abandoned and the lands are not returned to the adivasis. (See Mathew Areeparampil, 1988, for a full discussion of this question.)

It is interesting to note that the settlement officer who, in the 1920s, prepared the report on the district of Manbhum (of which Dhanbad was then a part) suggested that the restriction on transfer should be given up completely so as to "enable the peasants to get the full value of their land." (Rothermund, 1978, 81) A suggestion placed in the interests of the mineowners was justified as the interest of the peasants, who had carried out many uprisings in order to protect this very inalienability!

The recognition of the village land rights of Mundari *khuntkatti-*

dars, their rights to forest, the *korkar* rights and the limited alienability of adivasi land all had a beneficial impact on the local economy. The adivasis ". . . could clear new land, convert up-land into rice-land and improve irrigation facilities in comparable safety. They were less afraid than formerly that a rapacious landlord would succeed in stealing the fruits of their toil. The results of greater productivity became visible when the second round of settlement operations was started in Ranchi in 1927." (Schwerin, 1978, 66)

Similarly, in Santhal Parganas too, the Report of the Survey at the turn of the century pointed out that "while population has increased 44 per cent during the last 30 years, cultivation has extended 60 per cent." (McPherson, 1908, 123 in Hodne, 1966)

Hoffman, though a strong advocate of the *khuntkatti* system, was, nevertheless of the opinion that its breakdown was not only inevitable but also imminent. "It has no power of recovery, and that once the principle of joint ownership breaks down and equality of membership breaks down, it cannot be restored." (1950)

But such a breakdown has not occurred. The 1930 Settlement showed that there had been transfers to a number of non-*khuntkattidars*. But this was mainly to artisans to persuade them to settle down in the area. (Singh, 1978, 32) The process of reclamation of lands for agriculture is still proceeding in the *khuntkatti* areas, as is the settling of artisans. (Singh, 1978, 332) Such transfers of land to artisans are reported to be continuing in the Ho area of Singhbhum as well. (Dr Ann Mattan of Noamundi)

As far as the relative position of the *khuntkattidars* and the *praja* (non-*khuntkatti* Munda peasants) is concerned, Hoffman himself reported that the *praja* were moving away from reclaiming poor-quality uplands, to the better-quality lowlands. Singh (1978, 32) mentions that the current survey (started in the late 1970s and still continuing in some places) shows that in some villages in Porhat the *prajas* have more land than the *khuntkattidars* and their *bhayads* (kinsmen). At the same time, as mentioned earlier, the *praja* still have to depend on the consent of the assembly of *khuntkatti* families to remain in the village, they have to show deference to them. Further, observation in the Maranghada area also revealed that there has been more accumulation of durables like cycles, motorcyles, etc., in the hands of the *khuntkattidars* and that they have also been able to take to modern education on a larger scale than the *prajas*. The question of the role of forests in the *khuntkatti* areas will be taken up separately.

Here we should note, going back to the period of colonial rule,that though the greatest extent of alienation of adivasi land took place in the northern part of Chotanagpur, yet it was in the south, with relatively less land alienation, that there was the greatest resistance to the destruction of traditional adivasi rights and land systems. The reason for this lies in the fact that the communal land systems had been preserved to a greater extent in the south, while in the north individual systems of land ownership had come into existence in the immediate pre-British period itself. The adivasi community had a stronger and more real existence in the southern parts of Chotanagpur as compared to the north. This was in spite of the divisions that undoubtedly existed between the doiminant lineages of the *munda* (village headman) and *pahan* (village priest) and despite the real division into *khuntkattidars* and *prajas.*

How was it that these dominant lineages did not turn into a ruling class, one separated from the rest of the community? Whatever little separation occurred was at the level of the *parha* rajas, who were somewhat sanskritized. But, on the whole, the dominant lineages had not separated from the community. They were a distinct stratum, but one within the community. The beginnings of separation can be seen not only in the superior economic position but also in new rules of marriage, whereby members of *khuntkatti* clans would marry those from other such clans; or, men from locally superior clans *(khuntkattidars)* could keep women from locally inferior clans *(praja)* as mistresses and did not have to marry them. (Sachhidanand, 1967) But these economic and social changes were not consolidated into clear class-divisions of women-takers and women-givers.

The reasons why these dominant lineages did not turn into a ruling class are numerous. For one, there was no one clan (of which a lineage is a part) that was of *khuntkatti* status all over. (MacDougall, 1985, 16) In some places one clan would be of that status, while members of that same clan would be of low *praja* status in another area. This obviously inhibited the formation of a clear-cut dominant clan, or lineage.

The second factor was that higher status also carried with it greater social responsibilities. Special land was set apart for the *munda* and *pahan.* But the obligations of feasting were quite heavy and perhaps often went beyond the produce of these special lands. For instance, in the mutual help institution of *madaid,* where peasants work on each others' fields in return for a meal and some liquor, the expecta-

tion is that, when working on the fields of *munda* or *pahan*, they will be fed better than when working on other people's lands. Further, a larger strip of land is left all round the field as remuneration for those harvesting the *munda's* land, than would be left in the case of harvesting of other adivasis' lands.(Report by Praval Mahto of Singhbhum) But this does not rule out the possibility (mentioned by Ann Whitehead for the Kusasi) that the superior lineages could command larger amounts of the labour of other households while poorer households worked a disproportionate number of labour days for others. (1981, 99)

The third factor, was that at least from the time of Akbar, a substantial portion of the surplus produced in Jharkhand went out of the area, and was accumulated outside. This factor became even stronger with the onset of colonial rule. The adivasi communities as a whole were subject to outside exploitation, and this went for the dominant lineages too.

The state itself developed as an institution exogenous to these tribes. The ruling class that was formed in this process was not a section of the tribes, that is, it was not from the dominant lineages that the ruling class was formed. Rather, from the beginning the ruling class was from outside. To point to the existence of dominant lineages, and to divisions within the adivasi communities, even to the rise of modern "elites" in the present, should not be equated with these sections being identified as the local ruling class. An anlaysis of the ruling class and its composition is only possible by looking at the overall relations of the village and the adivasi community with the outside, with the state and other classes, like merchants, etc.

The fact that there has not been a full separation of the dominant lineages into ruling sections is seen in two ways: one, the members of the dominant lineages, both male and female, work in almost the same ways and to the same extent as those of the other lineages; and, two, where families do keep servants to help in both house and field work, these servants stay virtually as members of the family of the landowners.

In the course of this long transition, what has happened to the status of women, in particular, to the land rights of women?

7

Women, Witches and Land Rights

In the adivasi communities of Jharkhand land is inherited in the male line. In fact, the lineage is itself defined in terms of descendants in the male line. The foundation of the village community is, as a result, that of the male descendants of the original reclaimers of the soil. *Khuntkatti* and related systems of land ownership are defined in these terms. Within this system of descent women, nevertheless, have had certain definite, though limited, rights in land. These rights have evolved over a period of time: custom is changing even now.

Adivasi custom has a fine gradation of various rights in land that women in different stations can have. The rights of unmarried daughters, wives, widows, and so on have all been elaborately spelled out. (See W.G.Archer, 1984, for the most comprehensive account of such rights.) Summing up the whole gamut of these rights one can say that they are of two kinds—one is a life interest in land, a right to manage land and its produce; and the other is a right to a share of the produce of the land.

This second right, a right not to manage or use the land as one wishes but to a share of the produce, is again of two kinds. The first is a maintenance *(khorposh)* right. The second is to a share of produce which may be over and above such maintenance needs—that of an unmarried daughter to a small portion of any crop she has helped harvest, which may be accumulated by her or be used to buy her own clothes, ornaments,etc. This in poorer families would only be a way of assuring maintenance for the daughters. But in that case too, such a right to decide one's own consumption would give the daughters a superior position as compared to that where their every act of consumption has to be approved beforehand by the head of the house. In the case of better-off families, this share of the income can be used by the daughters to, say, lend out money or purchase a goat, etc. Accumulation from *ir arpa*, as the share of the harvest is known, can

also be exchanged against a part of the family land. Archer mentions, "Panu Murmu of Dulu had a sister who took settlement of 15 bighas out of her ir arpa, before her marriage. She kept the lands but after she and her children had died they were inherited by the sons of her brother." (1984, 1142) Whatever is accumulated from such income belongs to the woman, and can be taken by her to her husband's home, where it will remain her property.

A woman can accumulate some assets. Income from her wage labour or her own sale of forest produce gathered by her, could also be used for such accumulation. But, it is expected that a woman will not "show off" her wealth. A father or brother may keep some land for a woman, in case her marriage breaks down. But this is not something a woman can claim as a right. Further, since remarriage usually takes place, any such allotment is only temporary. In the event of a couple being estranged after the "age of divorce" (i.e. after child-bearing age, when remarriage is not possible) then the man has to give her sufficient land for maintenance and to allow her to live apart. A wife has thus no rights in land. Whatever her relation to the land it is through the mediation of her husband.

It is the relation of widows to land that is most important, and the sphere in which many changes have come about. A widow becomes, in a sense, a substitute father (Archer, 1984, 173) for her sons. If her sons are majors she becomes the head of the household and if they are minor ". . . the widow inherits all the land and moveables exactly as if she were their father." (Archer, 1984, 173) She administers the household and supervises the cultivation. In the event of partition, when her sons grow up, she gets exactly what her dead husband could have claimed. In one way or another, she has the same rights as her dead husband. This gives her not just a right to be maintained, but a real life interest in the land. She has a right to manage the land and supervise its cultivation. She can even mortgage the land, not semi-permanently in the *zarpeshgi* form, but temporarily in the *bhu-gat bandha* form, where both interest and part of the principal are deemed to be returned out of the harvest, and the land reverts to the original owner after a fixed number of years. Moveables can be sold, but not the land. In cases where the widow has only daughters or no children at all, the woman acts as a substitute for her late husband. So long as she is alive, she inherits all the land and moveables. Of course, in this, as in all cases of a widow's rights, the right is conditional on her remaining in the village and on her not remarrying.

The life interest of a widow in her husband's land, is the right that has been most under attack and in which there have been numerous changes. In the 1906 Settlement in Santhal Parganas a number of women were observed to be in possession and were thus recorded for those lands. By the time of the 1922 Revision Settlement Santhal practice had "increasingly departed from the earlier principles". (Archer, 1984, 684) Consequently, in this Survey widows were recorded in two ways. The first was, as formerly, where they were recorded as having a life interest in the land. "In other cases the widow has like the daughter been recorded only in the remarks column as a *khorposhdar* for certain plots sufficient to maintain her until he death." (Gantzer, quoted in Archer, 1984, 685) *Khorposh* is a right not just to be maintained, but a right to the land. It is a *khorposh* tenure, that is a land right, a right to manage the land and supervise cultivation.

In the present context, what one observes is that in some instances even this right to a plot of land has been changed into a mere right to be maintained. Obviously, this change will be of benefit to the male inheritors only if the maintenance given were less than the available produce of the land that would otherwise be given for maintenance. Further, maintenance is elastic. When consumption is controlled by others, it is always possible, not just possible but even inevitable, that for widows, who are seen as merely living out their time, consumption will be reduced to the barest minimum possible.

An instance has been reported from Baharagora, Singhbhum district, where a Santhal widow was being pressurized by the male heirs of her husband to give up the land itself, in return for a promise of "maintenance". In this case, the village intervened on behalf of the widow and prevented the male claimants from seizing the land. (mentioned by Manas Sarkar, JKD cadre, Singhbhum)

Three phases in the degradation of widows' land rights can be seen—in the first, the widow has rights equal to those of her late husband; in the second, she has rights over a plot of land sufficient for her own maintenance; in the third, any independent access to land is negated, and the widow merely lives on maintenance provided by the male heirs of her husband. This last position is not very different from that of widows in Hindu society. Differences in the two situations come from (a) the continued participation of such adivasi widows in labour, both in the field and forest as well as the home, as a result of which widows too can have their own income from the collection and sale of various kinds of forest produce; and (b) the right

which widows still have, in the event of maltreatment by their relatives, to demand the allotment of a separate plot of land for their maintenance.

This third phase in the degradation of widow's rights has not yet been fully reached, but the pressures in that direction are visible. Most people, men in particular, have come to mean by the term *khorposh* mere maintenance and not a right to possess land (i.e. a usufructuary right) for maintenance.

The situation in which a woman has the most comprehensive land rights, on par with men, is when she is married in *ghar jamai* form, i.e. where the husband comes to reside in the woman's home, (matrilocality), and not according to the normal patrilocal rule. The *ghar jamai* form is normally used when a man has no sons to inherit the land. Earlier this form was not restricted to such a situation. With village approval, any woman could be married in the *ghar jamai* form.

> A daughter with brothers is eligible and neither the brothers nor any other ghar jawaes have any power of veto. One or more daughters can be given ghar jawaes and there are cases in which every daughter has been married in this way. Moreover the fact that a daughter has been married once in the ordinary way and has then been divorced or widowed is no bar to a second marriage in ghar jawae form. If there are no sisters and a widowed daughter is alive, she can herself arrange a ghar jawae provided the village agrees. (Archer, 1984, 207)

A daughter married in this form becomes like a son, and has the same rights to land as any other son. At times a smaller share may explicitly be decided upon at the time of marriage. This is often the case where the girl is in some way disabled or deformed. A woman married in this form retains her right to her father's land even if she divorces the *ghar jamai*.

That a woman could be married in *ghar jamai* form even when there were brothers eligible to inherit the land, is an indicator that at some time the patrilocal rule of marriage residence may not have been so strict, not necessarily the only rule of residence.

A final case in which a woman is given some rights to land, is that of some disability or deformity, which may make it difficult for her to get married. A woman in this condition may be a charge on one of her brothers, who will be given additional land to meet her needs. Or, she may herself be given a plot, smaller than what her brothers

get, out of which she could maintain herself.

The adivasi communities of Jharkhand are patrilineal. The major form of accumulation in their economies is that of land. Land is inherited in the male line. In this system women, say widows, had fairly definite, though limited rights. These rights must themselves have evolved over a period of time. Bodding, writing in the early part of this century, was of the opinion that the right to maintenance was itself a recent development. (Troisi, 1979, VI, 6) But from that time on a clear deterioration in the rights of women is apparent in the change from widows having a life interest in the lands of their late husbands, to their being given (for their maintenance) a plot of land which they have to manage, and then to their merely having a right to be maintained. What this deterioration shows is the growing ascendancy of the male relatives whose interest it is to take over the land as soon as possible, and not to have to wait till the death of the widow for it. In the next section we will go into the ramifications of this struggle to restrict women's right to land, and its manifestation, particularly in the form of witch hunting.

Along with the progressive deterioration of women's land rights, there is a trend, not very strong, but nevertheless existent, to increase the scope of women's land rights. Bodding wrote in 1925 that "there is a kind of movement on foot among the Santhal men to give their women a more secure position." (1925, 22) In the present, this is noticeable among the Santhal, Ho and Munda women (see also Singh, 1984, xv). Those without any sons, insist on the transfer of rights to their daughters even without a *ghar jamai.* There have been a number of instances in the recent period, particularly in parts of Jharkhand that are now in Orissa, of village councils giving land to women. (mentioned by Rose Kerketta, President, Jharkhand Mahila Mukti Samiti)

Among the Oraon, where even the traditional notion of the life interest of widows, or of their right to *khorposh* lands, does not exist, the trend for assertion of women's right to land seems much weaker. However, along with the growing assertion of women's land rights, there is also increased resistance from men on the ground that the transfer of land to women will undermine the very foundations of the social organization of the adivasis, centred as it is on the lineage, tracing descent from a common male ancestor.

Resistance to accepting the land rights of women comes not only from men, but from women too. At a workshop on "Women in the

Jharkhand Movement" (organized by the Jharkhand Mahila Mukti Samiti and Disha in July 1989) there was considerable opposition from the women to this question. To many it was difficult to comprehend that there could be a system different from the patrilineal one they were used to. They could envisage a demand for land only in the event of disability etc., but not as a general demand for women.

It is no surprise that a community as a whole, including its dominated sections (women in this case) internalize the ideology sanctifying the existing social organization. All communities exhibit such internalization of the dominant values. That is no reason to accept the existing order as being valid or just in some sense. But, the acceptance of such values, does however mean that politically they will have to be taken into account in working out a strategy for a movement to secure land rights for women.

WITCH HUNTING

A woman, when without husband or father, has a residual life interest in land. She can dispose of the produce and income from the land as she wants. This life interest of a widow restricts the property rights of the male agnates of the deceased husband, whose use of this land, for accumulation or for consumption, has to wait till after the death of the woman. In the case of a widow with children, the heirs are her own children. The economic stake of the widow in this situation is much less—it is not a life interest in the entire land, but simply a maintenance *(khorposh)* right. This maintenance right is not so much of a charge on possible accumulation; rather it is the life interest of a widow without children, which also means that she is unprotected, that is the major fetter on the property rights of the male agnates of her late husband.

The phenomenon of witch hunting among the adviasi communities of Jharkhand has been much noted and commented upon. Apart from some writings on the subject, discussions with adivasis show that there is a general feeling, particularly among the political leaders of the adivasis (and of Jharkhand) that the phenomenon of witch hunting is related to the attempt of male agnates to remove the threat to their property rights posed by widows' life interest in land. Dr Ram Dayal Munda, Head of the Department of Tribal and Regional Languages in Ranchi University, held that there is an "economics" to

witch hunting, an economics related to the destruction of the traditional land rights of women. T.K.Rapaz of the All-India Santhal Conference asserts that witch hunting has two functions—it is used by men of the dominant lineage (oligarchy was the term he used to describe them) against those who oppose them politically, and it is used to get rid of unwanted females. The unwanted females are chiefly widows, but may also include women who have become pregnant, but whom the men concerned do not wish to marry.

Various studies show that the victims of witch hunting are chiefly women and that too those who are old and unprotected. A police officer (A.B.Chaudhuri, 1987), in a study of Malda District, quotes police records:

> During the last thirty years from 1950, 95 cases could be listed in which Santals were killed by Santals. Out of these 46 cases could be determined as witch-killings and 42 happened to be of women. Of the 12 incidents of witch-killing in 1982, women were victims in 10 cases. All the individuals who could be saved by police since 1972 (52 in all) happened to be women. (160).

Summing up the kind of women who were victims, he points out, "Most of [them] . . . were widows and aged. . . . the significant thing had been the lack of protection or coverage from powerful relations."(156) A study of witches among the Santhals in the Duars (W.Bengal) shows that the victims were mainly women who were closely related to the accusers. "Out of thirty five cases, eleven were against brother's wife (sister-in-law), eight were against husband's mother (mother-in-law)." (Kochar, in Troisi, 1979, 6, 296) In another study of Mayurbhanj (Rout, in Troisi, 1979, 6, 406) the victims were as follows: step-mother, old woman, young widow, old woman, old woman, a woman, two women, woman and daughter, two widows and a man. Much earlier, Coupland, writing about the Hos of Singbhum had pointed out, "The murderer is, it may be noted, almost invariably a member of the family to which the witch belongs." (1911, 75)

In these adivasi communities, it is largely only women who are considered to have an evil influence and thus capable of being witches. Further, it should be noticed that witches are always from among the tribe concerned. Though the adivasis do not live in isolation but in mixed villages with different adivasis as well as non-adivasis, witches are never from outside the tribe concerned. Not

only is it a matter within the tribe, it is also a matter within the particular lineage. As a result, someone who is an evil influence in one lineage, may be quite acceptable in another. Hoffman mentions, "It is a very noteworthy fact that widows driven out as witches from their own villages, are easily received as servants in other villages, nobody there apprehending any harm from them." (1950, 1003) Being a servant is a reduction in status; but being accepted as that too means that the person is not considered an evil influence, one capable of doing harm. The manner in which witches are identified shows the role of internal struggles in the matter. Bodding had denounced the Santhal witch-finders *(jans)* as "unmitigated scoundrels", who are able to "denounce anyone they like". (in O'Malley 1910, 125)

The witch-finder, who is the *ojha* (spirit healer), through his questions and other means gathers information from the complainants. The identification of the witch is then based on the information gathered. Initially, the names of witches are not mentioned. The complainants are left to draw their own inference. All this makes it very easy to identify the person whom one wants to get rid of as the witch. Usually, the whole village knows beforehand the person who is going to be named a witch. The various tensions in the village and the identity of those women who are without support are both well-known.

In the first stage, a woman named as witch may be fined, asked to "behave" herself and otherwise threatened. Repetition of deaths due to diseases that cannot be identified, or other tragedies in the village, which are certain to occur in a not-too-long period of time, are then the occasion when the *ojha* may name the woman as a witch. By this time there is already a consensus in the village that a particular woman is a witch. It is in such a situation that the *ojha* actually names the witch. Recurrence of the usual tragedies is taken as proof that the witch is unrepenting. The woman may then be either driven out of the village or killed.

Witches are almost entirely women, that too widows without support of children. Such widows have a life interest in lands which, after their death, will pass into the hands of the male agnates of their husbands. Such women being denounced as witches and then driven away or killed, would result in the lands immediately passing into the hands of the husband's male agnates. The destruction of widows' life interest in lands is the immediate economic objective of the struggle reflected in witch hunting.

If the above analysis were correct, we would expect that, in tribes where women have greater rights to land, there should be a more intense internal struggle, reflected in witch-hunting being more widespread; and vice versa. It is among the Santhal that the land rights of widows still, to a larger extent than in the other tribes, take the form of a life interest. Among the Munda this has more or less been reduced to a maintenance right; while among the Oraon there is hardly any trace of a life interest. As far as witches are concerned, it is among the Santhal that witches are exclusively women, while among the Munda, Ho and Oraon, a witch can be either a woman or a man, although they are usually women. (Troisi, 1978, 217) This pattern does not seem to be a recent development.

Dalton, writing about the Hos, points out that "it is not only women that are accused of having dealings with the imps of darkness. Persons of the opposite sex are as frequently denounced; nor are the female victims of the orthodox old hag type." (1872, 198) Hoffman, whose work is based on observation in the last decade of the last century and the first decade of this century, mentions that witches are generally old women and "Men are less liable to these suspicions, though the existence of wizards is also believed in." (1950, 2920) As for the Santhals, Bodding writing in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and others before him, have all pointed out that Santhal witches were exclusively women.

The variation in the beliefs about the identity of witches fits in with the expected pattern of an exclusive identification of witches with women where, among the Santhal, women have a higher order of rights in land. Where, among the Munda and Oraon, women have a lower order of rights in land, there is not that exclusive identification of women alone as capable of being witches. But it should be noted, as pointed out by Tone Bleie, in a study of Oraons settled in Bangladesh (1985, 135): "Albeit in concrete instances, both men and women being suspected and even officially charged with bewitching, through the *folk-stories, people in general associated women or rather certain aspects of femininity with this practice.*" (Emphasis in original.)

As far as the incidents of witch-hunting are concerned, there are no definite figures that can be looked at, but there is a definite impression that the phenomenon is somewhat more widespread among the Santhal, than it is among the Munda and Oraon. Whether or not there is, in fact, such a situation and the connections suggested

above, needs to be investigated further.

This immediate political economy of witch hunting is, however, not all there is to the matter. Why this economic struggle takes the form of witch hunting also needs explanation. This form of the struggle would only be possible if there were some factors in the contradictions in adivasi society which make it possible. Consequently, the question of witch hunting cannot be treated merely at the economic level. It would have to be related to the ideological and political contradictions internal to adivasi society and to the forms of transition that it is undergoing. It is significant that the Santhal myth (Archer, 1974) of the origin of witchcraft ascribes it to the struggle between the sexes, within the family and in Santhali society as a whole.

> One day the village men assembled. 'We are men,' they said. 'Why are we disobeyed? If we say a word or two to women, they reply with twenty words of anger. We can bear this state no longer.' Then they said, 'Let us go to Maran Buru and learn an art so that these women will respect us more.' At midnight they met in the forest and called to Maran Buru. 'Grandfather,' they said, 'many men are so harassed that they have come to see you.' Maran Buru came to them. 'What is troubling you, grandchildren?' he said. They told him their trouble and implored him to teach them how to keep their womenfolk in order.

As the myth goes, the women came to know that the men had approached Maran Buru to teach them something. The women got the men drunk, dressed up in men's clothes and tricked Maran Buru into teaching them. "Maran Buru then taught them the incantations and gave them the power of eating men." The next day, when the men came, Maran Buru realized that he had been tricked by the women. He then made the men "expert in the art of witchfinding." (Archer, 1974, 292-93)

The idea that women had some power which was subsequently stolen from them by men, and then guarded carefully by them, is quite frequently seen in the myths of different tribes. The Mundurucu of South America, the Mbuti of Africa and the New Guinean Baurya are among those tribes that have myths of trumpets, pipes and such symbols stolen from the women. In the case of the Santhal myth, however, the men did not steal something from the women, something made by them (the women). Rather, it was the women, who

through trickery, acquired knowledge that they had no right to. But, what is more important is that in all these myths there is a change in the order of society, a change that establishes the authority of men.

In the Santhal myth, we can see that the categorization of women and men into witches and witchfinders respectively, was an essential part of the process of establishing the authority of men. The prior authority of women (which may have been a shared authority) seems to have been associated in some way with their mysterious powers of sexual attraction (creation?). The authority of men is traced to their superior powers in the sphere of religion and ritual. While women do participate in many matters of ritual and religion, they nevertheless have a definitely inferior position in this sphere. The most important of the rituals (for example, in the *sarna*, or to the *abe bongas*, the household spirits) are taboo for women. Similarly, they cannot partake of the most valued part of the sacrificial meat, the head. Men alone can become *ojhas*—spirit healers-cum-witchfinders. "A female who professes initmate familiarity with the bongas is looked upon as a witch and persecuted." (Archer 1974, 294) Thus, the evil power of women as witches is the obverse of the beneficient power of men as mediators with the spirits. Further, the exclusion of women from key ritual functions is reflected in their being regarded as witches, when they do in some way participate in these functions. The same actions which are allowed to men are taboo for women; when the taboo is broken, the women are regarded as evil influences. Bodding had remarked, ". . . I am inclined to think that the practice of witchcraft by Santal women is, to a certain extent, really secret worship, resorted to by women because they are not permitted to take part with the men directly and personally in ordinary public worship." (1925, 224) Participation in these rituals gives men their authority; exclusion from the same rituals deprives women of authority—when they do participate in these rituals, it is only as evil powers. The significance of these evil powers lies in their being a challenge to the existing order, the order of male authority.

There are two ways in which this conflict can be seen. One is that witchcraft is a form of rebellion against the established authority and order of society. This is how withcraft in the European Middle Ages has been analysed by, say, Jeffrey Burton Russell (1984): ". . . witchraft is an episode in the long struggle between authority and order on the one side and prophesy and rebellion on the other. . . The witch was a rebel against church and society at a time when the two were

wholly identified." (1984, 2-3) Or, Maria Mies (1986, 81), that the witch-hunt was "the reaction of the male-dominated classes against the rebellion of women." Marvin Harris sees it somewhat differently, not as reaction against the rebellion of women, but against peasant rebellion, the rebellion of the poor. "The principal result of the witch-hunt system (aside from the charred bodies) was that the poor came to believe that they were being victimized by witches and devils instead of princes and popes. . . It was the magic bullet of society's privileged and powerful classes." (237 and 240)

The second way is to see the denunciation of ritual knowledge by women as evil as an attempt by the denouncers (men) to change the established order (which may have been one of the authority of women alone, or one of the joint authority of women and men) and to set up in its place an order based on the authority of men. Witch-hunting is, in this analysis, not the suppression of a rebellion, but the process of establishing the authority of men, the process of establishing patriarchy. That which was formerly regarded as a mysterious power, is now turned into the source of all evil. Such an ideology is certainly conducive to the social process of controlling women. The threat of being declared a witch will certainly help to restrict non-conformism or deviance from the rules that are being established. The power of one section of society (men) to declare individuals of another section of society (women) as witches, is a great power that can be used to change the old order and establish a new one.

It follows from this that, from the existence or intensity of witch hunting, we cannot infer the low status of women. On the contrary, the very opposite may be true. The phenomenon of witch hunting is more likely in a situation where women do have a relatively high status and where that status is being degraded. What witch hunting reflects is an attack on the existing status of women. Both in the sphere of social authority in general and in that of land rights in particular, such an attack would not be necessary where a low status for women has already been well established, where that full control by men which is called patriarchy, has come into being. When widows live entirely at the mercy of their male relatives, their rights do not in any way restrict the full use of land by these relatives. It is when widows do have a substantial right to land (a life interest as opposed to a maintenance right, and even more so as opposed to living on charity) that they may become the targets of a witch hunt. It is where women

generally have considerable authority in society that it would be necessary to attack them as the "source of all evil", in order to establish the full authority of men. Where women's authority has been destroyed or reduced, such a continued attack would then not be necessary.

According to the account of Chotrae Deshmanjhi, who is said to have participated in the memorable Santhal Rebellion (*Hul*) of the 1850s, numerous girls were accused of witchcraft and slain. Kolean Haram told Skresfrud, "The greatest trouble for Santals is witches. Because of them we are enemies of each other. If there were no witches, how happy we might have been." (Archer and Culshaw 1945, 2)

The phenomenon of witch hunting cannot be understood in itself, but only in terms of the kind of transition that the society is undergoing. The kinds of transition in the Europe of the Middle Ages, after the Reformation, and in contemporary adivasi society in Jharkhand are quite different. In the adivasi societies under discussion, witch hunting is related to the attack on the prevailing status of women, to the attempt to reduce this status in adivasi society, and to establish in its place a patriarchy.

We can note one case in which witch-hunting played a role in bringing about a change in the order of society—in the well-known case of the "decline of the Iroquois matriarchate" (Antony F.C. Wallace quoted in Peggy Sanday 1981, 141) In Iroquoian tradition, women were the progenitors of the people, and the owners of the land and soil. (This account is taken from Peggy Sanday 1981.) The power of women and their title to the land evolved from circumstances in which wandering men followed game and stationary women developed early agriculture. Women were economically and ritually central to Iroquois society. The male chiefs of the Iroquois were chosen by women.

Defeated by white colonialism Iroquois men no longer needed or were able to range over thousands of miles. In this period the religion of Handsome Lake, with Christian influence, took root. Handsome Lake's 'Great Message' sought to eliminate drinking and witchcraft. Importantly, it sought to weaken the traditional bond between mother and daughter and to institute the nuclear family, centred on the husband-wife relationship. Whereas women had been central to Iroquoian hoe agriculture, the Great Message taught that men were to plough. Women were forbidden to do their own planting. Though

the Great Message sought to eliminate witchcraft, the accusation of witchcraft was used against those women who continued to do their own planting.

Many women resisted the change and sought to reassert their traditional powers. Older women continued to do their own planting. Handsome Lake accused such women of witchcraft and threatened them with execution. "The Creator is sad because of the tendency of old women to breed mischief." (Quoted in Sanday 1981, 142) Handsome Lake himself is said to have made many such accusations of witchcraft, but to have opposed execution. Executions, as one would expect, did occur. "One old woman was reported cut down while at work in her corn field in 1799. Another was reported executed on the spot after a council decided on her guilt. Four of the 'best women in the nation' narrowly escaped execution at Sandusky when the executioners refused to carry out the sentence. Probably not many old women died but the lesson was clear." (Joan Jensen, quoted in Peggy Sanday 1981, 142) We have not gone into the origins of witchcraft among the Iroquois. What can be seen above, nevertheless,is a clear case of the use of witch-hunting to change the order of society, political and economic, and to force women into a new gender role.

Tone Bleie's study (1985) of witch-hunting among Oraons now settled in Bangladesh, relates witch hunting similarly to an attempt to force women into a particular gender role. Even after marriage, women continue to maintain relations with their natal kin. "Their continued position in the natal. . . house is expressed in their continued participation in daily household work along with other female members when they visit their natal homes." (1985, 155) This is a situation very different from that prevailing in caste Hindu households, where women, on rare visits to their natal home, would not participate in daily household activities.

The continuation of relations with natal kin creates a conflict with the husband's family. Besides, women in the traditional system have some autonomy in spending money out of their own earnings. Consequently, ". . . in this local community, a continuous negotiation for an alignment of interests between in-married women and men is going on. Sometimes the opposing interest results in quarrels and fights. A powerful mode of *making* women align is the ideological evaluation of women's behaviour where the standards applied are very strict. Further these standards [are] the underpinning of the most elaborate and public discourse on the limits for a socially acceptable

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autonomous and moral behaviour; the *witchcraft-bisahi* complex." (1985, 157, emphases in original)

In one way or another, witch-hunting in tribes is related to the attempt to institute certain gender roles and norms, that must necessarily be different from what existed earlier.

An analysis by Robert Muchembled (1985) sees witch-hunting in France as part of the process of "acculturation" of the rural areas, involving destruction of the older mental structures, sexual practices, etc. Of course, this analysis does not relate the repression of witchcraft to changes in gender roles and, further, sees it not so much as a struggle *within* rural society, but as a struggle against rural society. Though the rural upper classes did participate in the witch-hunting, yet it was directed by "representatives of the Church, the king and the governing orders of society." (Muchembled 1985, 389)

Witch-hunting is not just related to stamping out witchcraft and its particular practices, as, for example, healing by women. The suppression of women healers and dealers in magical potions, is part of the struggle surrounding witch-hunting. In the Jharkhand tribes women may have formerly had a more important role in healing than they were found to have in the colonial period. It was pointed out (by Sanjay Basu-Mullick) about the Mundas, for instance, that there is no original Mundari word for a male healer. There is a Mundari word for witch-finder *(deora)*. but the word for male healer, *ojha*, is of Indo-Aryan origin. The specialist male healer, *ohja*, (who is now also the witch-finder) may well be a relatively late institution among the Mundas. The one area of medicine that is still the preserve of women, particularly old women, who are most likely to be denounced as witches, is that of contraception and abortion.

Witch-hunting may well be a part of the process of reducing women's role in healing (Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English 1973) and instituting an early male professional specialization: only males can receive the training to be *ojhas*. But witch-hunting is about much more than reducing women's role in healing. Further the struggle is not just, or even centrally, between witches and witch-finders. The struggle is centrally within the clans as a whole, a struggle to establish a new male order in ritual, political and economic terms.

THE MEANING OF LAND RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

Land as the private property of men (whether held by them individually or communally) is an important factor in the development of that overall control by men, which is called patriarchy. In the foregoing analysis we have seen how male domination was strengthened in the transition from hunter-gatherer bands to agrarian communities; how control of female labour in agrarian communities became crucial for realizing the possibilities of differential accumulation, resulting in the development of superior and inferior lineages; and how the development of forms of individual property in land, significantly accelerated by the transformations of the colonial and post-colonial period, intensified the trend of destroying the residual land rights of women in the adivasi communities. From life interest in land, to the right to maintenance *(khorposh)* and from that to living at the mercy of male relatives, this is the route travelled by women of these adivasi communities. The destruction of all residual land rights of women is the point when a full-fledged patriarchy is established. Of course,in the context of the adivasis of Jharkhand, agriculture is not the sole means of income. Gathering of forest products still provides a share of income and, as we have seen, is not subject to the same rules of male control as is the produce of agriculture. The role of forest-based production in arresting a decline in the position of women will be discussed later. Here we need to point out that a position of women's complete propertylessness in land is the point of an established patriarchy, one that goes along with the establishment of full-fledged forms of private property. The propertylessness of women and of slaves or the low castes go together. "Manu declares that the wife, the son and the slave—these are unpropertied, whatever they earn is the property of those to whom they belong." (R.S.Sharma, 1983, 42)

The very clear trend towards the destruction of women's rights in property and income, the fact that some of the adivasi communities of Jharkhand, like the Kherwars of Palamu, have actually travelled the full route to the establishment of patriarchy, shows that the present relatively superior, but fast-eroding position of adivasi women cannot be maintained as it is. Further development along the present pattern must destroy the existing rights of adivasi women and result in a situation no different from that which obtains in "mainstream", caste society.

Is this the only possible course of development, or can conscious

intervention change the course ? The latter is possible only if there is a conscious understanding of the necessity of changing the course of development and if the economic and other (political, idoelogical, etc.) pre-requisites for an alternative pattern are established. There has been considerable discussion in Jharkhand on the necessity of changing the present course of development, of not abandoning the positive factors of adivasi culture, but instead working out a new model of development, one which will build on the positive features of adivasi society. The various writings of Ram Dayal Munda and Nirmal Minz (1985) are expressions of this discussion. The goal is stated to be a "cultural regeneration" on the basis of the values that are held to characterize adivasi society—values of harmony with nature, equality in society, including a relatively superior position of women, and collectivism in economic activities. But, as mentioned earlier, the relatively superior position of women cannot be maintained as it is. It must wither and be destroyed, or the course of development must be changed.

It is in this context that the question of the full rights of women to land—the major factor in the unequal position of women in adivasi society and in its ongoing deterioration—comes in. On this basis women are also not full members of the community, participating equally in all its political and ritual affairs. Those women who participate in such matters, such as by being *mundas* (village chiefs) or *pahans* (village priests) do so as men. They are females (that is biologically female) but due to the absence of appropriate male heirs, they are transformed into the social category of men. They are married in the *ghar jamai* form, where the males take the role of the social category of women. This phenomenon shows very clearly that the gender category of women is not the same as the biological category of females. In some situations, the biological category of females can be turned into the gender category of men, and the biological category of males can be turned into the gender category of women.

Coming back to the present question, it is exclusion from land that is at the base, or the economic base of women's unequal participation in the adivasi community, including the family. Given this, is it sufficient to take up the demand to implement a right, such as that to a life interest in land for widows, a right that is being rapidly degraded? This right has, till recently, been a customary one in adivasi society. It is also possible that this customary right is itself of recent origin. Against the attempts to degrade this to a mere right to maintenance,

it is necessary to defend the right to a life interest in all or at least part, of the land. This is a necessary, immediate struggle in adivasi society. But this too will only be a temporary matter, which will give some relief to widows. The position of widows, the weakest of women, is itself related to the general position of women. Consequently, while taking up every struggle for the defence of the life interest of widows, it is necessary to go beyond this to secure the rights of women in general. That alone can secure the position of women as a whole, including that of widows.

The question of granting land rights to women has often been seen as a matter that would affect the integrity of tribal society. The Jharkhandi tribes have, as long as is known, been patrilineal. It should be noted that the Khasis, a north-eastern tribe speaking a language of the same group as the Mundari languages of Jharkhand, have a matrilineal system. There is, of course, no invariant relation between patrilineality and tribal society.

One of the defining characteristics of the tribal system, of tribal identity, is collectivism in economic activities, including a communal ownership of land. The collective or "community" is, however, defined to comprise the male kin group who, for instance, collectively own the *khuntkatti* lands. Why should the community not be re-defined to include women, not only as producers (which they are) but also as full owners, along with men? Such a redefinition of the community will only make it more inclusive and increase the collective character of the production system. If anything, including women as full members of the community will enhance the collective character of adivasi society.

Will land pass out of adivasi, or even of particular clan or lineage, hands in the event of it being given to women? This is an oft-repeated fear. There are numerous instances of non-adivasi men marrying adivasi women, as a means to getting land that otherwise cannot be held by non-adivasis. The 1986-87 Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes discusses this situation and demands that tribal women marrying non-tribals should not be allowed to own adivasi land. There is a problem of non-adivasis, chiefly traders and moneylenders, but also others, comparatively rich peasants, grabbing the lands of adivasi peasants in this way. The solution to this is not to enforce what would now be undemocratic, caste-like rules of marriage, viz. prohibiting or punishing those women who marry outsiders. The patriarchal bias in these rules is

seen in that there is no such penalty on adivasi men marrying non-adivasi women. Such prohibitions, besides being undemocratic, will not really solve the problem of alienation of adivasi lands. That problem will remain so long as adivasi land is alienable, even though some restrictions may be placed on this. Such restrictions have only led to various subterfuges to get around the law. Besides moneylenders and traders, the more-rapidly accumulating non-adivasi peasantry wiil acquire more and more of adivasi lands, so long as the land remains in some way alienable. Consequently, the solution to the problem of alienation of adivasi lands, whether through marriage of non-adivasis with adivasi women or through any other subterfuge, is to prohibit altogether the alienation of land. Alienation can only be halted when land is entirely owned by the village community, to be allotted to individuals only for the purposes of working on it. In a sense, this is what the *khuntkatti* lands are and this concept of land as the property of the village community must be extended to cover all lands.

Where there is a general right to alienate lands, and some restrictions are added on, experience has shown that this is not sufficient to protect the lands of the community. Alienation to moneylenders, traders and accumulating peasants will not be stopped, though the pace may not be the same as it might if there were no restrictions at all. Big capital and the trader-moneylender network will always raise the demand for removing restrictions on alienation. As we noted earlier, in the 1920s Survey itself the Settlement Officer recommended that restrictions on transfer should be removed, in the name of enabling peasants to get the full value of their land. What such a removal of all restrictions would lead to is the rapid loss of adivasi lands. The only protection lies in a complete ban on the right to alienate.

A similar debate on alienability and communal ownership took place in the Cordillera movement in the Philippines. One section proposed that the Igorots (the tribal people of Cordillera) "lay claim to what existing means may be availed of through the Philippine legal structure; specifically, that of applying for private title to lands classified as inalienable and disposable, and that of petitioning for the release or reclassification of so-called inalienable lands so that these can be privately titled." (Fr. Jose Bangao, 1984)

In opposition to this, Joanno Carino, of the Cordillera Consultative Committee, pointed out that "every single time areas have been released for alienable and disposable purposes, the people who were

able to take advantage of this were not native inhabitants but more so outsiders." (1984, 7) She further pointed out: "For an indigeneous people, the primary concept of land is not private. It is what may be termed as communal." And: "The experience of various groups of indigenous peoples all over the world points to this: that private tilling of ancestral land may well lead to the disintegration of the culture itself."

The famous adivasi-led rebellions of the nineteenth century were aimed at defending the community and communal ownership of land. This was not a full communal ownership, but was already at the stage of village ownership in the final instance, combined with individual allotment. This individual allotment, some of which was of a preferential nature, as to the *khuntkattidars*, was not alienable. This combination of village ownership with individual allotment was what was protected by the adivasi-led rebellions.

Had there been a full-fledged communal ownership, without any notion of individual allotment, which would have meant that income too would have accrued on the basis of either labour or need, had such full-fledged communal ownership been existing, then there may not have arisen any question of separate allotments to women. But that is not the case. In the present, a transition to full-fledged communal ownership would only be possible by first going through the phase of the combination of community ownership with private allotment.

There is individual allotment which is in the male line. Consequently, both in society and within the family there is an unequal position for women as compared to men. It is in this situation that the question of land for women is raised.

In the Chinese revolution, in each village the community allotted land individually to all its members, male and female. Women who married out lost their right to land in their natal village and acquired it in their marital village. The land that had been allotted to women who married out, was in turn reallotted to those (women) who married into the village. Provided land is not alienable, land rights for women would not lead to land passing out of adivasi hands and the integrity of the adivasi community, instead of being weakened would, on the contrary, be strengthened.

The ability of women to carry out any economic activity independently will strengthen their position. Marriage, or such a relation to a man, would not carry with it the economic compulsion of being

required as a means to gain access to land. Further, with allotments of land to men and women separately, and with the choice of retaining land in the natal village or acquiring it in the marital village, the choice of post-marital residence too would not have to necessarily follow the present pattern of patrilocality. Decisions about post-marital residence could be made without this one-sided, economic compulsion of gaining access to land. It is interesting to note that when such allotment to women was being discussed in Jharkhand, more than one woman activist said that if women were given land then they may not want to go and live in their husbands' homes.

The demand of land for women cannot be taken up in isolation, nor can it be won by the women alone. Such a demand has to be part of the movement to stop the process of alienation of adivasi lands, integrated into the Jharkhand movement for political, economic and other favourable conditions for the advance of Jharkhand. It is also necessary that the men realize that the demand is not such as will disrupt and destroy whatever is left of the community. Rather, it is a means to strengthen the adivasi community and work out a course for its collective development. Taking up this demand will strengthen the Jharkhand movement, whereas ignoring it will weaken the movement and jeopardize its long-term prospects.

The demand of land for women should not only be taken up within the Jharkhand movement, but should also be done in such a manner as would strengthen the participatory, political institutions, like the traditional panchayat. Of course, this needs to be modified so as to allow for the particpation of women.

As against attempts to erode all customary laws, in order to make the adivasis conform to the debased standards of caste Hindu society, one may uphold the customary laws of the tribes. But this does not mean that there should be no change in it. In fact customary law remains customary law only if it changes—as customs do—along with the times. As a matter of political strategy, attempts to change customary laws need to be taken up within the community, something that can only be done by the women of the tribes. Particularly in a situation where these communities are themselves facing extinction, there is resistance to interference by an outside authority such as the Supreme Court, which is seen as a move that will only hasten the disintegration of tribal society and the destruction of whatever in it is favourable to the position of women. But upholding customary law against attempts to impose the standards of caste Hindu society, and standing

for necessary changes in it being taken up within the community, should not become excuses for insisting that there can be no change in present-day customs, which are themselves not immutable and are the products of long periods of historical change. The allotment of land to women, as to men, without the right of alienating it, will check the erosion of the tribal community and enable it to work an alternative, collective path of development.

8

Women and Forests

In analysing the role of women in the forest economy of gathering, it should be noted that women perform a major part of the labour of gathering. Calculations based on Fernandes and Menon's study, (1987, 84) show that women do some 60 per cent of the total family labour of gathering and roughly 70 per cent of this is devoted to firewood collection. Thus women do play the major role in the gathering of forest products. But theirs is not, however, the sole role: men's labour forms 40 per cent of the total and 30 per cent of that of firewood collection. In addition, much of the work is done jointly: as pointed out earlier, the division of labour in gathering is not as strict as it is in, say, plough agriculture.

While forests are, to an extent, owned by the village community, they are not,however, worked in a collective manner. The actual labour of gathering is organized by each household. The products of trees on private land belong to the family concerned. Community-owned forests too are allotted to different families for the purposes of gathering.

Within the family too, the manner in which income from gathering accrues and the controls over its spending are different from what we see in the case of agriculture. The produce of agriculture accrues to the male head of the family. Control over this is partly joint and lies in the hands of both men and women, but in the final analysis, control lies in the hands of the male head of the household. Even if women may have some say in spending agricultural income, it is never considered their income.

As opposed to this, in the case of gathering, income is supposed to be that of the person who performs the work. There is no distinction between the labour of the producer and that of marketing. The same person usually does both. If anything, there may be instances of men doing the work of gathering while women do the marketing. It is only among tribes like the Kherwar, which have proceeded

somewhat further in the direction of caste/class society, that women, while taking part in production, do not do so in the marketing. The income from marketing then does not accrue to the individuals doing the labour of gathering. Women, on the whole, have greater rights over the income from their labour in gathering than they have in agriculture. We need then to understand the significance of this greater participation of women in gathering and their greater control over its income.

There is an old tradition of analysis which equates women with nature and men with culture. At one time this was used to explain the necessity of men's political domination over women, coexisting with the social-biologist view of the "naturalness" of men's domination. A counter (corollary?) to this view was the notion of women as natural, being "the carriers of a new morality through which the artificiality of civilization could be transcended." (Jordanova 1980, 43)

These earlier analyses rested essentially on women's role in procreation. Even Maria Mies's analysis finally comes down to the "qualitatively different bodies" with which men and women act upon nature as a result of which "women and men appropriate nature differently." (1988, 73) The analysis of the feminine principle has, however, been given a new dimension by Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive* (1988), where the base is women's role in production, whether in forest-based gathering or in agriculture. Leaving aside her analysis of peasant agriculture, we should here look at her analysis of the forest question.

To begin with there is her characterization of "traditional" economies. "Traditional economies are not advanced in the matter of non-vital needs satisfaction, but as far as the satisfaction of basic and vital needs is concerned, they are often what Marshall Sahlins has called 'the original affluent society'". The needs of the Amazonian tribes are more than satisfied by the rich rain forest; their poverty begins with its destruction. The story is the same for the Gonds of Bastar in India or the Penans of Sarawak in Malaysia." (12)

It is quite true that the destruction of their environments has led to a fall in the tribals' standards of nutrition and health. Citing many studies Buddhadeb Chaudhuri points out that "tribals living in remote areas [presumably in a better environment] have a better health status and more balanced food than those living in less remote areas." (1991, 14)

It has been pointed out earlier, that recent studies have shown that

these societies may have difficulties in obtaining carbohydrates (Myers, 1988, 264) and water. Their leisure is then, at least in part, enforced by the lack of energy. What about medical care ? Can we say that they are "affluent" in this respect ? And is education, including literacy, not to be included as a "basic and vital need" ? Are "basic and vital needs" only those that are merely physical and biological ? The understanding of what are basic and vital needs changes with history and with changing modes of production. But leaving that aside, these "traditional societies" are quite likely deficient in both energy and medical protection. Further, there is a very low limit to the population densities that these production systems can support.

The next point in Vandana Shiva's analysis is that "Forests have always been central to Indian civilization".(54) Or, again, "All religions and cultures of the South Asia region have been rooted in the forests, not through fear and ignorance, but through ecological insight." (57) Evidence of the centrality of forests is seen in that "Sacred forests and sacred groves were created and maintained throughout India as a cultural response for their protection." (57)

When we talk of India in terms of its civilization we must clearly distinguish between two kinds of regions. One is the hill-forest regions such as Uttarakhand in the north or Jharkhand in the centre, or the north-east as a whole. The other is the plains, such as the Ganga-Jamuna *doab*. Various streams have contributed to Indian civilization, but that which is central to it, or its mainstream, is clearly the culture that came with settled agriculture in the Ganga-Jamuna *doab*. This is the seat of the caste order and the state system. This "mainstream" Indian civilization was set up by subjugating the forest dwellers and clearing the forests for settled cultivation. The whole conflict of the *devas* and *asurs* represents this struggle of plains "civilization" to subdue the forest dwellers, the hunter-gatherers. Despite the very substantial contribution of the forest dwellers to Indian civilization they have never been accepted as part of the "mainstream" of this civilization. They were both feared and subjugated.

Romila Thapar points out, "The proximity of the forests is always present in the consciousness of the settlers as is evident from the contrasting images of *grama* and *aranya*, where the forest is the place of exile, of demons and *raksasas*, but also where the hermitages of the *risis* were situated. The latter were in a sense the vanguard of the new society and the hermitages could act as the nuclei of new

settlements. This might also explain why there was such hostility towards these hermitages from those who regarded the forests as their hunting grounds." (1984, 29) The above analysis certainly does not point to South Asian civilization being "rooted in the forests. . . through ecological insight."

Or, as Arvind Das points out, ". . . the problem of the relationship between the tribals and the so-called 'mainstream population' is civilizational in spite of the fact that the development of Indian civilization is a saga of the intertwining of the tribal and non-tribal strands." And, "At the best of times, the subjugation of the tribal has always carried the implicit threat of coercion. Thus even after Priyadarshini Ashok, the Maurayan emperor, had renounced war, his edict addressed to the atavikas, the forest-dwellers, forefathers of today's Jharkhandis, grimly reminded them, "Forget not that the Beloved of the Gods, in addition to being righteous, is also powerful.' " (1989,133)

It is clear that forest-dwellers were subjugated by the various states. At the same time, there continued to be a symbiotic relationship between the forests and the plains. The forests were particularly important for minerals, chiefly iron, without which a settled agricultural civilization would not even have been possible. But, in this symbiosis or articulation, there was also dominance, a dominance by the states in the plains of the pre-state societies in the forests. While taking heavily from the forest-dwellers (K.S.Singh points out that the names of a number of agricultural implements, like *langala* or *hala*, the plough or *kuddala*, the spade, are of Mundari origin) the very same tribes have also been suppressed by "mainstream" Indian civilization. This suppression is symbolically expressed in the destruction of the very sacred groves (*sarnas*) that, say, the Jharkhandis revere. Far from these sacred groves being "created and maintained throughout India", their destruction is the expression of the "mainstream" Indian civilization's subjugation of the tribals. Of course, this subjugation was periodically contested by the tribes and that is why the forest has been potrayed as peopled by fearsome and malevolent spirits (*asurs*).

The suppression of the tribal system and the break between the tribal and caste systems of Indian society, is particularly marked in the case of the position of women. The propertylessness of women, initiated in settled agriculture within the tribal situation, is carried to its extreme with the formation of caste society. The absence of any seclusion of women in the tribal situation, the free mixing of adoles-

cents of both sexes, the choice of women and men with regard to their marriage partners, the ease of divorce, the practice of widow remarriage—all come under severe attack in the period of formation of caste society. In fact, these practices are looked down upon in caste Hindu society as signs of "backwardness". This was true in the period of the formation of Indian caste society, and is true even today. Even the practice of community dancing among the tribals is looked down on as a sign of "backwardness".

Ignoring this crucial break in the development of "mainstream" Indian civilization, amounts to ignoring the fact that the "mainstream" has both feared and subjugated the tribals of the forests. Far from being central to Indian civilization, "mainstream" Indian civilization has been founded on the violent suppression of the forest-dwellers and on the negation of their social systems, particularly in the relation of the sexes.

Having decided that the forests have always been central to Indian civilization, Shiva proceeds to demonstrate that women play the key, central role in the forest economy. Identifying men with hunting and women with gathering, she says, "Lee and de Vore have shown expirically how even among existing hunters and gatherers, women provide up to 80 per cent of the daily food, whereas men contribute only a small portion by hunting." (50)

It will be useful to reproduce a detailed calculation made by Richard Lee, before going on to consider the situation in Jharkhand.

> On the first count [i.e. by weight or calorific content] it is clear that gathered foods provide about twice the food value of hunted foods. In the July 1974 study of work, vegetable products yielded 69 per cent by weight and 71 per cent of the calories of the Dobe camp. At other seasons of the year such as the late-summer and fall camps in mongongo nut groves or its in bean fields, the proportion of vegetable foods may go even higher, as high as 80 per cent. Is there ever a time when hunting predominates over gathering? In late-spring and early-summer hunting camps the proportion of meat may sharply rise. In one study, the four hunters of a small camp of 12 killed 29 animals in 17 days for a per capita consumption of almost two kilos of meat per day. These bursts of meat-eating tend to be of short duration, however, and overall I estimate that meat comprises between 30 and 40 per cent and vegetables between 60 and 70 per cent. (1982, 40)

After showing that vegetable products, the result of gathering,

contribute a major part of the diet of gatherer-hunters, Lee goes on to add, "Of course, not all the plant gathering is done by women. Men gather as well, and their work provides almost a fifth of all the gathered food. Therefore when we sum up the overall contribution of each sex, the disparity is reduced. Men produce about 44 per cent and women 56 per cent of the weight and calories of the food brought into the camp."

The mistakes made in Shiva's analysis are first, to take the contribution of hunting at that time of the year when it is at its lowest, and then to identify women with gathering entirely. Men also play a role in gathering, even though the major part of it is done by women.

The lack of a rigidly-defined division of labour is a characteristic of foragers, whether it be the !Kung (Shostak: "The division of labour by sexes is not rigidly defined" 1981, 46) or the Tiwi (Martin and Voorhies: "Among the Tiwi, then, there is no simple dichotomization of subsistence activities by sex. Hunting and gathering are practised by both men and women." 1975, 197) This is so in the case of the Jharkhand tribes that combine gathering with agriculture. In their gathering activities there is not such a rigid division of labour, as is characteristic of agriculture. Neither is there the tabooing of "core" activities, such as ploughing in agriculture. There is a differential access to weapons, but that is more important at the political level, rather than that of economic activities and production relations.

Men also participate in gathering, and many gathering activities are joint ones which involve the whole family. Men, for instance, shake the trees while women and children gather the nuts and fruits. In fact, more than in any other kind of production, gathering involves the greatest extent of joint labour. Contrary to Shiva's analysis thus, gathering is not the exclusive province of women.

What about the management and allocation of forest resources, decisions on cutting, and so on? Here too Shiva contends that ". . . it is primarily women who use and manage the produce of forest and trees." (60) While it may be true that women use and manage forest produce within the family, this is not necessarily so when it comes to decisions about management of the forest as a whole for the village community.

In the Jharkhand areas where village-owned forests still exist, they are managed by the village assembly, the traditional *panchayat*. This *panchayat* takes decisions on the individual requests for timber for various purposes, on the allocation of trees for gathering to individual

families, and so on. In other words, it is the *panchayat* that manages the forests. In the examples of forest regeneration discussed later (N.G.Basu, 1987) in each instance the village or *parha panchayat* has played the crucial role in decisions on regeneration and preservation. The *panchayats* are all male affairs: women have no role in decision-making here. Only those women who have no brothers and have been married in the *ghar jamai* manner (which makes them socially male) may participate in the deliberations. So, for Jharkhand it is certainly not true that women manage forests at the level of the village community. At the level of the village, the job of management is essentially a male one.

In reconciling the various interests in the village, there are some situations in which the interests of cutting and of gathering may come into conflict. One is where cutting is undertaken for some big capitalist interests by the local contractors-cum-traders. In this situation the village-level agents are usually locally important men, such as the village chief, *munda*, etc. The labourers who are engaged in cutting are also likely to be mainly male. Inasmuch as their wages from this work are spent mainly on liquor rather than on the family's needs, the men's interests as cutters conflict with the longer-term interests of women as gatherers.

Another situation in which the interests of cutting and gathering come into conflict is that where, due to the inability to otherwise meet normal consumption (subsistence) requirements, individual households undertake to cut trees in order to sell the wood. This can lead to a mining of the forest resource, particularly where the rate of cutting exceeds that of regeneration of the forest. Such cutting and sale of wood as head-loads is undertaken to a large extent by women. All around Ranchi, for example, one can see women head-loaders. "In Bundu-Tamar area because the National Highway passes through these villages, the women in large numbers have entered the profession of selling wood by establishing improvised booths on the roadside." (S.P. Sinha, 1987, 201)

In such a situation, where decisions on cutting are taken by individual families, whether by women or men, there is no way in which the various individual decisions can be reconciled in such a way that total cutting does not exceed the ecologically sound limit. Individual decisions, whether by women or by men, cannot lead to such sound village-level decisions. The latter are only possible when decisions on the extent of cutting are taken at the level of the village

as a community. As against the present practice in Jharkhand, where women are normally excluded from the village panchayats that manage the forests and other common resources of the village, there should be a practice of women being full members of the community and participating in all its decisions

In the instances of forest regeneration by village (i.e. non-government) effort mentioned earlier (see N.G.Basu, 1987) all these efforts were the result of community decisions, taken by either the village *panchayat* or the area (*parha*) *panchayat*, institutions that are all male. This shows the importance of community decisions. Individual decisions, whether of the women or of the men, cannot achieve this result, while community decisions can usually achieve ecologically desirable results. They need to be strengthened by the inclusion of women as full members of the community, and their participation in all decisions.

However, it is not enough to merely have decision-making bodies which have the "right" members; the latter must also be informed with knowledge of the ecology in order to be able to arrive at correct decisions. Here too, Vandana Shiva implies that it is women (alone?) who have "a holistic and ecological knowledge of nature's processes," (24) although, in this case, she does not put this forward as a firm contention, as in the earlier issues discussed. Rather, it remains merely an implication that women possess this knowledge, while men do not. We have already seen that it is male-monopolized traditional *panchayats* that have been responsible for the few ecological success stories. Evidently, men do have some "holistic and ecological" knowledge of nature's processes. It is the same *panchayats* that have been administering the *khuntkatti* and other village-owned forests that have survived so far. Men also participate in gathering forest produce. Further, in the tribal system of medicine, advanced knowledge of herbal medicine, acquired through a period of training with a guru, is a monopoly of men. Knowledge of contraception and abortion, however, is still a female monopoly. This shows that women certainly do not have a monopoly of "holistic and ecological" knowledge of nature's processes. To the extent the tribes do have such knowledge, it seems to be part of the knowledge of all, men and women alike.

Here a limitation of such knowledge should be mentioned. It has been related to a level of production which was basically geared to meeting directly the consumption and production requirements of the tribal economy. Given that some exchange of forest for non-forest

(industrial) products is essential for the adivasis and for the town-dwellers, this existing knowledge of nature's processes will have to be deepened, so that the interaction with nature may become more complex. Knowledge of nature is itself the result of human alteration of nature. As Engels had pointed out, "It is precisely the alteration of nature by [hu]man, not solely nature as such, which is the most essential and immediate basis of human thought." (1875, 231)

Though women do play a major role in the labour of gathering of forest produce they do not play a commensurate role in the management of forests, which today is the province of either the *panchayat* or the village community. The village community, as already noted above, is now defined as the community of the male heads of households. To continue with the village community in this manner, will not in itself help to secure an adequate position for women in the management of the forests, a field in which their own knowledge is less than that of men. Consequently, this community needs to be redefined to include all adult men and women. This will also help to strengthen the position of women, by giving them a role in management that they presently do not have.

Even where the forests are owned by the village community, the rights of gathering and sale are allotted by the community to individual families. We have seen that within the family the income from sale of forest produce tends to be counted as the income of the individual who gathers and sells the produce. Increasing the income from forestry will thus also help strengthen the position of women within the family.

In the gatherer-cum-agriculturist tribes of Jharkhand the continued importance of gathering as a source of income and the different relations of accrual and control of income in gathering as opposed to agriculture has been the key basis for women's relatively superior position in these tribes, as compared to the pure agriculturists of the plains.

As analysed in earlier chapters, with agriculture there is a certain relation of production within the family. In this women are labourers but do not have ownership rights over the land or its produce. Land as property is very much the domain of men. We have also seen that the historical trend is one of reducing women's residual rights in land.

Income from gathering, however, provides a counterpoint to this and, where the marketing too is done by women, this income accrues to them. With all the limitations on the spending of this income

discussed earlier it, nevertheless, provides a superior position for women as compared with agriculture alone.

The questions of women's role in the forest and that of the effect of forest-based production on the status of women are, however, connected to larger questions of ecology and the forms of property that exist in the forest. These are the matters to which we must now turn.

9

Forests

While in agriculture the land itself is produced by labour, in gathering and other, similar ways of acquiring forest produce, land, (i.e. the forest) is taken as it exists in nature. Land in this case is the subject of labour rather than an instrument of it. Production is an appropriation from nature, which takes place without a transformation of the latter.

The above distinction, however, does not hold in all activities of gathering from the forest, some of which do involve a transformation of that which exists. To that extent the forest is not merely a subject, but also an instrument of labour. In the case of *tendu* leaves, for instance, the *tendu* plants have to be pruned in advance of the gathering season. Again, the production of *lac* also involves a cultivation of the *lac* insect on appropriate trees, like *palash*. The extent or degree of production of these resources is much less than in the case of, say, agricultural land.

However, this difference does not necessarily have any bearing on the rights of ownership that accrue in forests, as compared to those in agricultural lands. Differences in the labour process do not themselves imply one or other form of property. We cannot deduce rights of ownership or their absence simply from the labour process.

It might seem that the fact of agricultural land being produced, and of forests being a natural resource, in itself confers certain rights on the producer of land, rights that are not so conferred in the case of a natural resource such as forests. But this is not so. In the first place, in the case of land itself, ownership rights do not necessarily accrue to the producer. They may as easily accrue to the landlord, or anyone else who, by established law or force, has a superior claim on the land. Property is not the reflection of the relationship of the producer to what is produced. Rather, it is the reflection of the relation of the owner of the means of production to the producer. So, differences in the nature of the labour processes are in no way equivalent to differences in property rights.

Rights of ownership of forests have evolved historically, just as rights in land. In the pre-colonial situation the village community in Jharkhand seems to have been the acknowledged owner of the forest around it in the sense that its use of the forest, whether to gather/hunt forest products or to bring forest land under cultivation, was an unhindered right, and did not involve any payment to or permission of a superior. This was the position in other parts of India too.From Madras it was reported that villages had traditionally owned all forests in their boundaries.(Guha, 1983, 1883) The village community in Jharkhand did pay a tribute (*canda*) to the superior, the Chotanagpur Raj. But this tribute, as noted earlier, was not related to the extent of agricultural land, rather it was a fixed amount. With regard to the forest, the village community's rights in relation to forest land, both for gathering and for transformation into agricultural land, were recognized as being unhindered. According to a 1893 Forest Department handbook (quoted in Guha, 1983, 1883) under the "oriental governments" that preceded the Raj, "anyone was accustomed, without let or hindrance, to get what he wanted from the forest, to graze his cattle where he liked, and to clear jungle growth for cultivation wherever he listed."

Some minor (minor in the sense that they did not greatly affect the gathering rights of the adivasis or have any adverse ecological impact) and irregular rights of the feudal superiors did exist. In some cases Indian rulers had asserted their "rights of absolute ownership", such as demarcating hunting reserves. (Chhatrapati Singh, 1986, 11) In others they levied a small tax on forest products exported out of the forest, such as medicinal herbs, and commercial species of trees, for example, teak and sandalwood. Management by the state was, as Guha points out (1988), not unknown but "it was usually restricted in its applicability and oriented towards highly specific ends—e.g. the reservation of elephant forests in the Mauryan period or later edicts affirming a state monopoly over commercial species as teak and sandalwood." (Guha, 1988, 4)

In Jharkhand, when the Chotanagpur Raj became a tributary of the Mughal Empire, and *jagirs* were given to tax-collectors,in the core areas of the Chotnagpur Raj (north-west of Ranchi) the right to turn forest into agricultural land was restricted, and reclamation led to the payment of tax on such land. In the *khuntkatti* areas, however, there was no such restriction on the village community's right in forest land.

Precedents of Indian rulers asserting their right to forests were cited

by the British to argue for the absolute control and ownership right of the state over all forest land, whether inhabited or not. (Singh, 1986, 11) But the actual sanction came not from such history, but from the power of British colonial rule. One forest officer is reported to have bluntly stated in 1873: "The right of conquest is the strongest of all rights—it is a right against which there is no appeal." (Quoted in Guha, 1983, 1884)

Claiming absolute right over the forests for the colonial state, meant that the rights of collection and land creation of the inhabitants of the forest now became a mere privilege and not a right. As such it was exercised at the mercy of the colonial state and could be curtailed as and when the state saw fit.

Colonial forest policy was initially aimed at being able to provide essential forest products for military-strategic interests. With European forest reserves depleted or threatened with depletion, the British imperialists turned to India and other colonies for supplies of essential timber, for shipbuilding, iron smelting, and so on.

> By the sixteenth century, much of Western Europe had been deforested, and Northern Europe was supplying Britain with large quantities of wood. Between 1600 and 1700, Ireland's forests were devastated to meet England's needs of timber for shipbuilding, iron smelting and tanning. With oak forests vanishing in England, a permanent supply of suitable timber was required for the Royal Navy "for the safety of the empire depended on its wooden walls". This was the period of fierce competition between the colonial powers, and Indian teak, the most durable of shipbuilding timbers, saved England during the war with Napoleon and the later maritime expansion. Ships were built in dockyards in Goa and on the Malabar coast, as well as from teak imported into England. (Guha, 1983, 1883)

Subsequently, the construction of the railways for both strategic and commercial (export of raw materials and import of manufactured goods) purposes led to a great increase in the demand for timber. Military strategic interests came to the fore again in the First and Second World Wars, when India supplied large quantities of timber for the Allied war effort. In the meanwhile, the direct interests of the industrial bourgeoisie (both British and allied Indian big business) began to be felt in the growing demand for timber for paper.

In the post-1947 period the demand of the big industrial bourgeoisie for raw materials, especially for the paper and pulp industries has been the crucial factor in determining forest policy. It is the

extension of colonial forest policy in a systematic way that leads to Indian officials extolling the colonial origins of the policies they are implementing. (Of course, forest officials are not alone in extolling the virtues of colonial policy; the whole Indian state does the same!) In 1978 the then Inspector General of Forests stated: "The year 1885 was a memorable year in the history of Indian forestry. For, in that year, Lord Dalhousie, the then Governor General of India, enumerated for the first time an outline of a permanent programme of forest administration. His proclamation laid down the ruling principle of management of "state forests, namely that timber standing on a state forest was state property to which individuals [or communities] had no rights or claims." (Quoted in Guha, 1983, 1888)

The change in the system of rights in the forest was the result of a change in the requirements of the paramount state power. As mentioned earlier, prior to the colonial period the commercial use of forest produce was largely restricted to such commodities as pepper, cardamom and ivory "whose extraction did not seriously affect either the ecology of the forest or customary use." (Guha, 1988, 8) In the colonial (and post-colonial) period it is timber that has become the major forest commodity. It is the increased demand for timber that led to "a qualitative change in the patterns of harvesting and utilization of the forest." (Guha, 1988, 8) In this changed situation there arose a conflict between the traditional collecting rights of the adivasis, as also the requirements of ecological balance and the commercial, profit-maximising demand of the state.

Denying the rights of the dwellers and turning these rights into "privileges", was followed by a change in the nature of the forest itself. (Guha, 1988, 9) The species promoted by the colonial, and later Indian, foresters, working under the guidance of the "international" aid agencies, have been those like pine, cedar and teak (earlier), or eucalyptus (later), which were of little direct use to the local population, while the species they replaced (e.g.oak in the Himalayas and sal in Jharkhand) were intensively used for fuel, fodder and so on. The forest policy of the Indian state has thus been aimed at reducing the collecting and other rights of the forest dwellers, increasing the supply of forest-based raw materials for industries and also maximising the revenue earned by the various governments from the sale of forest produce.

The lack of rights of the forest dwellers in the forest is an act of discrimination against them, for the similar rights of plains people in

land, deriving from occupancy, have, if not fully at least to an extent, been recognized. (Singh, 1986, 15) Further, struggles of the indigenous peoples in various parts of the world have forced the bourgeois states, who have pursued policies of exterminating the indigenous peoples, to now accept these peoples' rights over land that was not agricultural land. The ancestral domain, a domain that was peopled by hunter-gatherer tribes, has been accepted as belonging to the bands that wandered over the area. Holding the land as an ancestral domain has now been accepted as proof of title. In the manner, one might say, that Munda burial stones were accepted as proof of title to land, such burial stones have been accepted as proof of title in the case of areas of hunting-gathering, i.e. forests. In one case in the United States of America, a cluster of bands was accepted as having title to an area of ten million acres. (C. Singh, 1986, 32) In Australia the 1974 Royal Commission to inquire into Aboriginal land rights recommended that the indigenous people should be able to lay claim to lands on the basis of "traditional ownership." (Nicholas, 1982, 447) The Australian tribes, it should be noted, were not agriculturists. Their relation to the land (forests) was one of hunter-gatherers.

These advances in the legal rights in forest land of the indigenous peoples of Australia and North America are basically notional. In reality, there has not been much of a difference in the actual possession of land or compensation for that which was forcibly taken away. But in India there has been not been even such a notional advance in the legal position with regard to forest rights. "With regard to forest land resources and the people who can claim a communal title on them, the situation in India is comparable to that in southern Zimbabwe [i.e. colonial Rhodesia]. A privy council there found that rights in land were not possessed by any native tribes however long they have been domiciled in that part of Africa!" (Singh, 1986, 34) Chhatrapati Singh points out that the colonial judge argued this judgement as follows:

> Some tribes are so low in the scale of social organisation that their usages and conceptions of rights and duties are not to be reconciled with the institutions or the legal ideas of civilized society. Such a gulf cannot be bridged. It would be idle to impute to such people some shadow of the rights known to our law and then to transmute it with the substance of transferable rights of property as we know them." (1986, 34)

The author then aptly points out that such a judgement may as well have been made in India.

This discrimination against forest dwellers at the economic level is paralleled by a discrimination at the level of civil rights. The 1865 Forest Act initiated legal discrimination against forest dwellers by giving forest officers the right to arrest without warrant and the power to levy penalties, doing away with the usual apparatus of police and courts. These bureaucrats were thus given both police and judicial powers. This position continues today, making the forest dwellers second-class citizens, who lack even the basic civil rights that others have.(Singh, 1986, 14)

In the Jharkhand region the various uprisings of the nineteenth century did have the effect (as in the case of land) of preserving some of the rights of the adivasi communities in the forest. As in the case of land again, it is in the Mundari *khuntkatti* system that the greatest rights of the community in forests have been preserved. The village community, the body of Mundari *khuntkattidars* are the owners of the forests included within the periphery of their villages. They have an unrestricted right to collect produce and to bring portions of the forest under cultivation.

In other areas there existed two kinds of situations. (Katyayan, 1987) In some the "landlord" exercised the right to sell and manage the jungle, while the cultivators had the right to take wood for domestic purposes and for sale, for which right they paid a fixed amount per family to the "landlord". These jungles were called *katat.* As Rashmi Katyayan's paper points out, the forests in this system were often denuded, with unrestricted felling which was the result of a combination of commercial demand for the wood, and the destruction of the conditions of reproduction of the local economy, which drove the cultivator-gatherers to *mine* their forests. (See Shanmugarathnam 1988 for an analysis of some conditions leading pauperised producers to mine their forests.) The other situation was where "landlords" had established "their exclusive rights in jungles, having deprived the cultivators of all rights of user, either through the agency of the courts or by the exercise of force." (Katyayan, 1987, 4) Thus, besides the *khuntkatti* system there were two forms of rights in forests, *rakhat* and *katat. Katat* means forests in which all the ordinary customary rights of collection and sale are freely exercised. While *rakhat* is an area of forest in which the ordinary customary rights, especially as regards cutting wood for fuel or timber, are subject to

certain restrictions. (Katyayan, 1987, 4) The system of allocating of the village forest as *rakhat* was officially adopted in the 1927-33 settlement.

> The "landlords" and the resident cultivators had agreed that portions of the village jungles should be set aside either as separate rakhats of each party or as a common (ijmal) rakhat of both. ... Thus, more than fifty years ago, a system of conservation and "Social Forestry" based on *people's participation* came in force. (Katyayan, 1987, 5, emphasis in original)

The system of common holdings by the village, with regulated user rights for its residents, is enumerated in the village record of rights. It was this that—more or less—obtained in the old Ranchi district.

The nineteenth century uprisings and other adivasi struggles thus had the effect of preserving some forms of village ownership rights over forests, either in the more complete *khuntkatti* form or in the broken-down *rakhat* form. Both of these forms of village ownership of the forests have helped to conserve the forests to a greater extent than has occurred in the case of state-owned forests, even though the rights of access may have been regulated.

The loss of community ownership of forests changed the relation of the producers to the forest. While with community ownership there was a definite purpose in conserving the forest, in restricting cutting to the possible rate of regeneration, with state ownership no such purpose remained for forest dwellers. This loss of interest in conservation was over and above the destructive commercial cutting of forests, which in classical bourgeois fashion related to the forests merely as a point of departure, and not as a point of return too. With state ownership there was the threat, or rather the reality, that the state would at any time take over forests which were commercially viable. At the end of the nineteenth century the Superintendent of Dehra Dun commenting on the attitude of the Jaunsar-Bawar tribes towards the forest, said that "not altogether without reason, the villagers believe that any self-denial or trouble they may exercise in preserving and improving their third class forests will end in appropriation of the forests by the [forest] department as soon as they become commercially viable." (Quoted in Guha, 1983, 1885)

The success or otherwise of community ownership in conserving forests depends on the nature of the community. In a well-developed class economy, the village community, or the panchayat organization,

represents not the whole village but basically only the ruling class of landlords, whether of the old feudal or the new capitalist variety. A recent Planning Commission evaluation (reported in Shahnaz Anklesaria Aiyar, "Failure of Social Forestry", *Indian Express*, September 4, 1989) of the "social forestry" scheme brings out the failure of "community" schemes in states like Maharashtra and Haryana, which have a well-developed class structure, and are dominated by landlords. "... the disinterest of powerful panchayat members towards lower-income groups and women (the traditional unpaid fuelwood gatherers) meant no one bothered to nurture these community plantations." (Aiyar, *Indian Express*, September 4, 1989) Here, the community, in fact does not exist. The dominant classes are not interested in forest programmes that will lighten the work of the poor and women. Their only interest is in forestry programmes that will help their own accumulation, which is why they have taken to so-called farm forestry, that is to cultivating trees on their own lands. Any supposed community projects will fail in this situation.

On the other hand, where the village community that owns the forest is a fairly homogenous one, without a well-developed class structure (in this situation we may characterize such a village community as being one in which the differentiation of classes has only led to the development of a rich peasant class, and that too not of a strong type) and has a relatively homogenous class situation, the community ownership of forests has worked quite well in preserving forests.The experience of Uttarakhand is instructive in this regard.

> A recent survey concluded that many of the panchayats in Garhwal are in better condition than the reserved forests in the area. In fact, forest officials in both the colonial and post colonial periods have admitted that the panchayat forests in Garhwal, though small in extent as a result of government policy, were invariably well maintained. It is precisely where cohesive (and largely egalitarian) village communities have retained control over their forest habitat, that such a situation may prevail. (Guha, 1983, 1891)

In Jharkhand there are the obvious examples of the *khuntkatti* forests. In these community owned forests, while the major timber trees like sal have to a large extent been cut down, the fruit and other bearing trees are still standing. The sal trees too, it should be noted, were mainly cut down in a hurry after the passing of the Bihar Zamindari Abolition Bill, when it was suspected that the state was

going to take over all the forests. (Mentioned by Sanjay Basu Mullick) So, in this case too, it was really a felt threat to the community's ownership of the forests which led to the cutting down of the timber trees.

Other than the *khuntkatti* forests, the successes in forestry in Jharkhand are in those cases where the forests have been collectively owned and managed. N.G.Basu (1987) gives some examples of community initiatives in forest schemes in different parts of Ranchi district. In Bero and Angara blocks, people in some villages have taken over degraded government forests, regenerated them and are protecting these on their own. In Bero the village community engages some two or three persons as guards. To meet the expenses of these guards each family gives 40 kgs of paddy every year. In this way a group of 10 villages of Bero guard 200 hectares of forest. In another area some 60 acres have been planted and are protected. Similarly, in a group of three villages in Angara block the people have planted and protected forests.

These example show that where the village as a community, one without very deep class divisions, has decided to do so, they have been able to successfully take up reforestation and also to protect the forests. Their initiative has been restricted to those forests that they have been able to control. Basu points out that "these villages continue depradation of reserved forests." (1987, 29)

Examples, some mentioned above, also show that where the village community has not felt that the forest project was theirs, rather their feeling is that the forest department will take the fruits of the plantation, the people have even deliberately pulled up the seedlings planted by the government. Rashmi Katyayan (1987) mentions such an instance in Ranchi of a village uprooting the seedlings planted by the government.

A community of producers, which would be quite homogenous, then definitely makes a difference to the success or failure of forestry programmes. A Committee on Forests and Tribals of India, headed by Dr. B.K.Roy Burman recommended that "Wherever community rights exist in forest land, they should be recognised and adopted to serve the urgent needs of soil and water management and reforestation of denuded tracts by suitable species." (Sinha, 1987, 64) Recognizing community rights where they exist is not enough however; it is necessary to extend such rights to all village communities in the forests. As opposed to this community approach, the government has,

as is to be expected, favoured the individual approach of "farm forestry".

PRINCIPLES OF FOREST MANAGEMENT AND FORMS OF OWNERSHIP

The traditional system of forest production took into account the need to preserve the forest indefinitely as a resource, and as a subject of labour. In this system forest products (fruits, vegetables, game, etc.) were not of the kind that, like grain, could be accumulated. Of them, only nuts could be stored for as long a period as grain, and nuts did not account for a major part of forest produce. The accumulation that did take place in these adivasi societies was in the form of land, and such accumulation resulted in more land being brought under cultivation. Production from the forest continued to be based on that which could be harvested on a sustained basis, the "sustained yield" or "preserve and use" principle. The bases of forest use were often reflected in taboos and religious practices, which ensured compliance with them. (Basu, 1987, 19)

At the same time, these traditional societies, or many of them, also had what could be termed ecologically harmful or wasteful methods of production. Woodburn points out, ". . . the ecological effects of, for example, those hunters and gatherers who systematically use fire to burn the vegetation from very large areas in order to drive game or in order to induce fresh growth of young grass that will attract the game, are very substantial—far more substantial than the clearance and cultivation of some few acres by the farmer." (1980, 100)

Such ecologically harmful procedures did not, however, necessarily lead to ecological crises threatening the continued existence of that society. Nonetheless, ecological crises did occur when the society could no longer increase production by extending its domain, but had to do so by intensified use of the same methods as before, which meant that more and more was taken out of the natural environment, while the methods of production remained the same. As Marvin Harris points out:

> Regardless of its immediate cause, intensification is always counterproductive. In the absence of technological change, it leads inevitably to the depletion of the environment and the lowering of the

> efficiency of production since the increased effort sooner or later must be applied to more remote, less reliable, and less bountiful animals, plants, soils, minerals and sources of energy. (1977, 5)

Of course, it is the same environmental depletion "which in general results in new systems of production—each with a characteristic form of violence, drudgery, exploitation, or cruelty." (xi)

Contrary to the notion that "traditional" (pre-capitalist, including forms of communal and feudal) economies were immune from ecological problems and crises, it must be pointed out that every mode of production has known forms of ecological crises. "The people who, in Mesopotamia, Greece, Asia Minor and elsewhere, destroyed the forests to obtain cultivable land, never dreamed that by removing along with the forests the collecting centres and reservoirs of moisture they were laying the basis for the present forlorn state of those countries." (Engels, 1876, 74) What is distinctive about the present ecological crisis is that it is not local, not restricted to some part of the globe; but is worldwide. It is the specific contribution of capitalism, of imperialism, that it has developed a global ecological crisis (Willi Dickhut 1986 and Pal Steigan 1990), one that threatens the existence of the human species itself.

In the capitalist world view, that which is not produced by human labour has no cost. It is merely a resource, one that is to be used as far as necessary, and at whatever rate required for strategic purposes or for accumulation. "Since exchange-value is a definite social manner of expressing the amount of labour bestowed upon an object, nature has no more to do with it, than it has in fixing the *rate of exchange*" (Marx, *Capital*, I, 82) Such a resource may have a money cost in terms of a scarcity rent, but that is not a real cost, since production is not involved. The attempts at "greening capitalism" through "pollution certificates" which can be bought and sold on the market are an attempt to bring into the realm of exchange value that which is intrinsically outside it. Nature is, in a sense, a point of departure for the capitalist process of accumulation, but not a point of return.

Here a distinction must be made between capitalist home production and capitalist colonialism. In the first case, there was the question of competing capitals and of other producers (e.g. peasants) who did have a political presence. None of these restraints was present in the colonies. In fact, policies were deliberately adopted to denude the colonies while preserving the resources of the home countries. It was

in the colonies thus that capitalist exploitation could be carried to its extreme.

> As long as the individual manufacturer sells a manufactured or purchased commodity with the usual coveted profit, he is satisfied and does not concern himself with what becomes afterwards of the commodity and its purchasers. The same thing applies to the natural effects of the same actions. What cared the Spanish planters in Cuba, who burned down forests on the slopes of the mountains and obtained from the ashes sufficient fertilizers for one generation of very highly profitable coffee trees ... what cared they that the heavy tropical rainfall afterwards washed away the unprotected upper stratum of the soil leaving behind only bare soil. (Engels 1876, 182)

This view of costs has remained an essential part of the capitalist approach to forests, even when these forests have been clearly threatened with denudation.

Calculations by the capitalist state on the principles of profit maximization cannot yield results that are basically different from the profit calculations of numerous capitalists. State capitalist calculations can only remove some of the inconsistencies in the various individual calculations (something that is otherwise done by the market). Because they are informed by the principle of profit maximization, they cannot remove the limitations of the very principle that informs them. The irrationalities and destructive consequences of private profit maximization cannot be overcome by a state basing itself on private maximization. This holds good irrespective of whether the capital in that economy is formally, individually or collectively held. State ownership can be just as private, private to the capitalist class, as individual ownership. (Bettelheim 1976)

State capitalist ownership can, to an extent, help take a "longer" view of the resource position. Capital in the imperialist countries has, it would seem, taken a longer view than the more short-term, commercially oriented capital of the Third World. (This short-term view is made more severe by the reliance of the concerned governments on revenue from the sale of forest produce as an important part of income.) But, this "longer" view of metropolitan capital has been based on the denudation of the natural resources of the Third World. It has been pointed out (Shanmugarathnam 1988) that Japan's conservation of its own forests has been made possible by Japanese capital's denudation of the forests of South-east Asia. The "longer"

view is for the metropolitan countries, and enables them to transfer the burden of the depletion of natural resources to the Third World.

The dismal ecological record of the bureaucratic capitalist countries of East Europe has rightly led to the rejection of state capitalism as a solution to the ecological problem. What this experience or rather nightmare, shows is that bureaucratic capitalism should not be mistaken for socialism. Nor should legal forms be identified with class relations.(Bettelheim 976, 20) Nor can one see the development of the productive forces as the "driving force of history". To accept this, and that too without criticizing the productive forces developed by capitalism (e.g. nuclear energy, energy-intensive inorganic agriculture) means that whatever planning there is will itself be on a capitalist basis. ". . . a revolutionary politics that leaves the question of what we need to the solution provided by the development of the productive forces shares its politics with those who would conserve the society it wants to revolutionise—and differs only in its greater incoherence." (Kate Soper, 1981, 212)

Added to this "incoherence" was the enormous military burden of the Soviet camp in trying to compete with U.S. imperialism for world hegemony. The military burden inhibited capital accumulation in new production methods and thus forced reliance on a mere intensification of the existing methods of production, an intensification of production that, as Marvin Harris argues (1977), is bound to lead to an ecological crisis.

But a rejection of that model as the path to a better society does not in any way involve a simultaneous rejection of the critique of capitalism. Two factors restrict any attempt to solve the question of ecological regulation through the mechanism of the market and profits—the first, that a resource which is not produced cannot be described by the system of costs as embodied in exchange value; and the second, that the use of the world's non-renewable resources, which must affect future generations (Georgescu-Roegen, 1976) cannot be encompassed in economic cost calculations. This second point was referred to by Marx in a not-so-well-known passage:

> From the standpoint of a higher economic form of society, private ownership of the globe by a single individual will appear quite as absurd as private ownership of one man by another. Even a whole society, a nation, or even all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the globe. They are only its possessors, its usufructuaries, and, like *boni pater families*, they must hand

it down to succeeding generations in an improved condition. (*Capital*, III, 776)

State ownership and management of the forests in India has led to the adoption of various "social forestry" schemes. The aim of these schemes has been to increase the supply of suitable wood to meet the pulp requirements of the paper and fibre industries. "Social forestry" has had no relevance to the problems of production faced by the adivasi and other forest-dweller communities. As mentioned earlier, the failure to involve the communities in the business of "social forestry" led to a change of policy and the adoption of the policy of "farm forestry". In place of communities, individuals were now to be the vehicle for commercial cultivation of trees. This change of policy is only an admission of the fact that in a profit-based system, schemes for involving the "community" cannot work, and it is only possible to increase wood supplies by relying on profit-based commercial production by peasants, particularly the rich peasants, and capitalist farmers.

"Farm forestry" by individual peasants comes up against the same problem that production based on profit calculations cannot take account of the considerations of ecological balance. In fact, individual production on a commercial basis, while it may lead to an immediate, short-term increase in production, will only itensify the problems of ecological imbalance. The ecological disaster of the Green Revolution, shows in another context, the similar problems of ecological imbalance in commercialization of production by capitalist landlords and peasants. "Farm forestry" based on commercial cultivation of trees cannot solve the problems of ecological imbalance.

The problem of denudation too cannot be solved on the basis of individual "farm forestry". Harvesting of trees will be based not on considerations of ecological balance, which individuals acting on profit maximization cannot take into account. Harvesting of trees on the basis of profit maximization will intensify with a vengeance the problems of denudation, even leading to "overproduction" which may depress prices in the market.

The economic relations within which a society or community operates determine the possibilities or otherwise of preventing the denudation of forests and restoring/maintaining ecological balance. We can, however, be sure that a regime based on the primacy of profit maximization cannot solve the problems; this inability is not changed

by the fact of a collective (i.e. collective ownership by the capitalist class) state ownership. Further, with the present state of our knowledge, we may not now be able to specify adequately the nature of the relations which must hold if ecological balance is to be maintained. Even if the necessary balances are known they can, if at all, be only accidentally achieved in a system of profit maximization. Profit being partial, cannot be a yardstick in a holistic approach. Holism is only possible in an economic system based on an appreciation of production possibilities in the context of the natural environment. Of course there is no simple criterion of "needs", anthropologically-given, or *a priori* needs. Needs and systems of consumption, are themselves the result of the system of production, as Kate Soper re-emphasizes (1981), which is why an appeal to reject consumerism, without an attack on the production relations of capital, is bound to be limited in its effect. Consequently, reform or change of the basic organization of the economic system is a necessary precondition for being able to implement ecologically suitable policies. To repeat a point, establishing preconditions for being able to work out and implement a solution, is not the solution itself and should not be mistaken for one.

The concept of "sustainable development", based on an estimation of the world's available resources has been under discussion, as, for instance, in the World Commission on Environment and Development report *Our Common Future* (1987). Even if such a concept of "sustainable development" could be worked out, on the basis of the existing and potential technologies, such a development can not be implemented in the context of a capitalist world order, with the conditions of an imperialist system. Imperialism is based on monopoly. It is capital's inherent drive for monopoly that will determine the course of accumulation in the present world order, rather than any concept of "sustainable development".

Again, any restructuring of the world's economic order in order to offset the present imbalance against the South, will, if it is not accompanied by a restructuring of these economies (so that they cease to be organized on the basis of profit, and that too imperfectly), have only a partial effect on the problems of ecological balance and denudation of forests. A restructuring of the international economic order will only give the economies of the South a larger share than they have at present of global production. Such a restructuring may reduce the present burden of ecological imbalance that is put on these

economies. But, without changing their structure it will not be possible for them to get out of the crises of ecological imbalance and denudation of resources that their own capitalist development will inevitably raise.

The experience of India shows that such development will have two effects: it will intensify the destruction of the natural resources of areas like Jharkhand, which are virtual internal colonies for the ruling classes, providing cheap raw materials and cheap labour; and it will also lead to an attempt on the part of the major regional powers such as India to subordinate the economies of their smaller neighbours to their own requirements. All in all, the problems of ecological imbalance and denudation of resources cannot be solved by any sort of restructuring within the system of production for profit.

Does this mean that until such an overall change, if not in the world economic order, then at least in India's economic order comes about, there is nothing that can be done to tackle the questions of ecological imbalance and denudation of resources? That is not the meaning of the above analysis. Based on the rebuilding and strengthening of the still existing systems of community forestry, as in Jharkhand, one can attempt to frame policies that will reverse present ecological trends. These may not be entirely successful, but they will certainly help to point the direction in which one should look for policies that maintain ecological balance and also help to bring to the fore the influence of economic structures on ecological policies.

Community ownership in this case means ownership by an associated group of producers. It is not ownership by the whole society of producers, but only by a group of that society. Experience at the level of such groups may be part of a transition to a higher form of social ownership, provided, of course, that the whole of society is moving in that direction.

In the existing situation where the groups of producers are neither isolated from each other nor self-sufficient, the policies that we look for cannot be based on the principle of mere production for direct use by the community. The community itself requires many products, which it does not produce. At the same time, the rest of the economy also requires from these communities of producers some supplies of forest and such natural products. So the policies that are worked out cannot be on the old system of production for direct use. Production for exchange, though the exchange be aimed at procuring for the community various commodities that it considers necessary, will have

to be incorporated in the policies that are evaluated. Thus, the ecological balance cannot be a mere re-statement of the old systems (expressed in taboos and religious practices) of forest production. The aim of ecological balance will have to be re-established on a new basis that includes, along with production for direct use, also production for exchange.

Production for exchange is not necessarily capitalist. Peasants and other small producers undertake such production (i.e. for commercial use). The adivasi communities, including women, also undertake production for exchange. The objective of this exchange and of this commercial production, however, is not the same as that in capitalism. In the latter the objective is to maximize profit, while in the former the objective is to satisfy, in the best possible way, the family's needs. Commercial production carried on by individual families, as of peasants, will inevitably lead to differences in the rate of accumulation of the various peasant families and consequently to class differentiation among the peasants. Where accumulation resulting from such exchange (or even accumulation resulting without such exchange) is collectively carried out, the effects of differential accumulation will be seen in the differences between various village communities. So, a process of production controlled by the village communities is not a final solution to the question of an appropriate form of economic organization, but it is a step in that direction; one that will bring out new contradictions that will have to be resolved in the next advance. (See William Hinton, 1989, for a recent discussion on the possible role of village communities, those that jointly own the land and other resources.)

A failure to distinguish between different forms of commercial production runs right through the analysis in Vandana Shiva's book, *Staying Alive.* (1988) For instance, "A commercial interest has the primary object of maximising exchange value on the market through the extraction of commercially valuable species—forest ecosystems are therefore reduced to the timber of such wood." (1988, 63) The commercial interest in this case is a capitalist interest, one which has nothing to do with the conditions of life of the producers. But what about a village community which owns the forest, and looks at both its needs for direct use of various products and its indirect (i.e. commercial) use of those products, by exchanging them for others which it requires? Such a village will moderate its maximization of the exchange value earned through the extraction of commercially valu-

able species, by its requirements for direct use of forest products and by its knowledge of the conditions of their regeneration.

The problem with Vandana Shiva's analysis it that it misses the specificity of capitalist exchange and of capitalist production and consequently ends up equating production for exchange with all the evils of the capitalist system of production to maximize surplus value. It must once again be reiterated that ownership by village communites, by groups of associated producers, will itself be only a step in developing an economic system that will allow the identification and implementation of ecologically viable growth.

China's experience in ecology was, at one time, favourably commented upon and, more recently, has been the subject of hostile criticism. From a brief reading of it, however, two distinct periods stand out. The first is from the formation of the People's Republic upto the mid-seventies, the second from that time onwards, the period of the "Four Modernisations".

In the first period, as even a hostile critic like Vaclav Smil (1987) is forced to concede, China did succeed in increasing its forest cover from somewhere around 8 per cent in 1949 to about 13 per cent in 1979. This was achieved through the mass mobilization of rural communities in the forestry programme—mobilization made possible not only through political campaigns but in combination with definite relations of production and distribution of income. For instance, collectives were encouraged to plant trees on state land, the cost of seedlings was met by the state and the income was shared between the collective (70 per cent) and the state (30 per cent). (FAO 1979)

In a planned process decisions on the alternatives available in production are crucial, as they demonstrate the importance of the political process. There is no guarantee that such decisions will be ecologically sound. This could have been the case with the Chinese directive to convert land into grainfields, thereby losing sight of the necessary balances that needed to be kept with other farm activities. Nevertheless, it is with the adoption of the private allotment of land in the "responsibility" system that Chinese agriculture is losing one of its former strengths—the importance given to organic farming. "The benefits of organic farming, now recognized even in the most advanced Western nations, are undeniable, but more and more Chinese peasants are abandoning the practices that have made China the paragon of recycle farming." (Smil, 1987, 186)

What this shows is that farming on the basis of individual profit cannot lead to the adoption of holistic environment policies. The abolition of private property does not guarantee that appropriate eco-regulatory policies will be implemented, but in a regime of private profit this will not be possible.

The connection between forms of property, or production relations, and ecological practices is not accepted in some strands of ecological analysis. Vandana Shiva (1988) is prominent among those who deny such a relation. It is either technology as such (represented by "industrialization") or colonialism, devoid of any concept of relations of production, that is responsible for the maldevelopment of the present world. While a positive feature of this work is the criticism of capitalist productive forces, something that has been ignored in socialist critiques of capitalism, yet the author does not relate these forces to the existing relations of production. Similarly, attitudes (such as consumerism) are left unrelated to the capitalist production structures that give rise to them.

While for Rosa Luxemburg colonialism was a necessary condition for capitalism to exist, in order to realize the surplus value produced by workers in capitalism, for Vandana Shiva colonialism is everything. "Development was thus reduced to a continuation of the process of colonisation; it became an extension of the project of wealth creation in modern western patriarchy's economic vision, which was based on the exploitation or exclusion of women (of the west and the non-west), on the exploitation and degradation of nature, and on the exploitation and erosion of other cultures." Relations of production (of capital and labour whether in the imperialist countries or colonies) and of exchange, based upon the former, have no role to play in her analysis. Consequently, the entire capitalist sector, including the workers in it, is identified as the problem. Nevertheless, it is correct, as Vandana Shiva maintains, that the solution will come from the exploited, the marginalized. To that extent the statement of the "feminine principle" as one of "respect for life in nature and society" (1988, 223) is useful, particularly in insisting that women are not merely the victims of "colonialism", but also (part) of those who can work out a solution for the society of the future.

But the crucial question remains: under what conditions of property and production relations can the principle of "respect for life in nature and society" be installed as the reigning principle governing economic production? This principle can only become effective in a

regime of collective ownership by society, where human society will be able to rationally order its exchange with nature. Marx, in a well-known passage on the deleterious effects of capitalist agriculture, pointed to the necessity of some form of eco-regulation of production. "By this action it destroys at the same time the health of the town labourer and the intellectual life of the rural labourer. But while upsetting the naturally grown conditions for the maintenance of that circulation of matter, it imperiously calls for its restoration as a system, as a regulating law of social production, and under a form appropriate to the full development of the human race." (*Capital*, I, 305-6)

Instead of the "man as master of nature" approach of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, should one accept the "man as indistinguishable from the rest of nature" approach of, say, Hinduism? Coinciding with the rest of nature, so that there would be no distinction among the various species in nature does not bring what is specific to the human species: possession of consciousness. Consequently, rejecting capitalism's triumphalist approach to nature does not mean a simple return to the views existing in other traditions, such as Hinduism. In the just society of the future, humans will not be understood to "simply coincide with nature nor be radically different from it." (Alfred Schmidt 1971, 83)

The answer to problems of ecology does not lie in philosophy. "We have not understood the environmental crisis until we realize that there is *no* philosophical answer to it." (Gerald James Larson 1989, 271) Certainly a particular philosophical approach, an ontology is necessary; but that does not in itself provide the answer, and that philosophical approach itself is a crystallization of the results of human enquiry. The answers to questions of the environment have to be found through all-sided (dialectical) enquiry. It is not as though the answers are already there, whether in the tribal systems of ecological knowledge, or in the feminine principle, only waiting to be put into effect. The answers have to be discovered, something that will not be possible with scientific enquiry crippled by the profit motive.

FOREST MOVEMENTS

Forest movements fall into two main categories. The first is movements to cut down or otherwise destroy forests. The second is those that preserve and defend forests against attempts to cut them down. The two kinds of movements, as we shall see, are very much related to each other and are both aimed at protecting the rights of the forest dwellers. An instance of the first kind is that of Santhals in Midnapore in the nineteen twenties. In this movement (Guha, 1988, 25-6) the Santhals attacked the weekly *haats*, they cut down the jungles leased to timber merchants. They caught fish from ponds "belonging" to local zamindars and breached the forest law over an area of some 200 square miles. The aim of this movement was not just to "loot" the exploiters, but to force the zamindars to concede their customary rights over forests.

The cutting down of forests allotted to timber merchants is also an attempt to define the people's own rights in the forest. When the forest is in any case going to be cut down, the people can certainly try to see that they at least get some benefits from that cutting down. Such instances of cutting down of forests over which the people have lost their rights are frequent. After the abolition of zamindari in Bihar in the early 1950s, when it was felt that the *khuntkatti* forests were going to be taken over by the government, there was a considerable felling of valuable sal trees. Significantly, this did not extend to the fruit trees, which would not be of much value to the state and which the people used in their everday lives.

The selective destruction of forests is seen in an instance from Kumaon reported by Guha (1988). The destruction was not only meant to contest the claim of the state over the forests, but only choose such targets as were most valuable to the state, while sparing those trees that were of direct use to the people. In this Kumaon movement of 1921, "...the 'incendiary' fires of the summer of 1921 covered 320 square miles of exclusively pine forests. In other words, by design rather than accident, the equally vast areas of broad leaved forests also controlled by the state, were spared as being of greater use to hill agriculture." (Guha, 1988, 41)

Opposition to state reforestation programmes, replacing the original mixed forests by a mono-culture of commercially valuable species, such as teak or later eucalyptus, has continued to this day. In the late seventies there was a widespread movement, centred around

Singhbhum, to oppose the planting of teak. As K.S.Singh puts it, "Resistance to teak became the symbol of the movement." (1982, 20) Plantations were attacked and nurseries were destroyed. What these movements show is resistance to the state's attempt to deny people the right to use the forests, by changing the very composition of the forests so that they do not contain such species that are of direct use to the people. The Comitttee on Forest and Tribals in India (1982) commented on the movement in Singhbhum: "The movement of felling trees has originated out of tribal protests against threat to their livelihood and identity as well as substitution of purely commercial species like teak in the natural, mixed, Sal-dominated forests. . . It is a mixed forest which nurtures the forestdwellers like tribals as well as birds and animals." (Quoted in Mathew Areeparampil, n.d.)

The other kind of movement has been that explicitly aimed at preventing state-sponsored cutting down of forests while asserting that forests belong to the people. One of the most notable of such movements was that led by Fetal Singh, Kherwar, in Palamu. With the Kherwar as the core, the Jharkhandis of this area had been active in the anti-British struggle, particularly in the 1942 Quit India movement. They had certainly expected that the land and forest would be theirs after British rule ended. But ten years of "independence" were sufficient for them to draw the conclusion that this was not what they had fought the British for. Fetal Singh said in 1957:

> Today we have no rights to land or forest. We are not allowed to take wood, leaves or bamboo from the forest. We preserve the forests, but today we are being called enemies of the forests. The contractors have the authority to cut as much of the jungle as they want, they are becoming lakhpatis and crorepatis, while we are put to great trouble to collect firewood. (Translated from *Jan Chetna*, July 1986)

The movement focussed on free utilization of forest produce and extraction of timber by the local people, without any payment. A secondary demand was also the non-payment of rent. (Singh, 1982, 188) Along with these economic demands the movement established its own government, "Bharat Sarkar". Fetal Singh said:

> We will stop cutting of forest wood by the contractors nor should any one go to work for the contractor in the jungle. We do not accept this government. We will establish our own Bharat Raj. We won't pay any sort of rent or tax. We should unite and establish our own Bharat Raj,

> we do not accept the police or Magistrate. If they would enforce their law and rule upon us we would not abide by that whatever may happen. (Singh, 1982, 190)

Many of these ideas were invoked in the name of Gandhi. But the movement, by not confining itself to the economic demands but going beyond them to confront the question of political power, continued the tradition of the great tribal-based uprisings of the nineteenth century.

The Palamu movement did not last very long: it was crushed by the use of police force. The memory of this movement, however, still endures among the people. In 1987 a "Fetal Singh Mela" (fair) was organized in the jungle areas of Ranka block of Palamu. As left organizations had become prominent in the area in the 1980s, the government was considerably alarmed at this invocation of the memory of a movement for a "jungle raj".

Resistance to state-sponsored cutting of forests has continued in many parts of Jharkhand. In Gumla district, for instance, in 1978 there was a large-scale movement to obstruct felling of trees and also plantation work by the Forest Department. In 1985, Jharkhandis in Jhargram, went with bows and arrows to stop the auction of forests. At times, when the felling has not been stopped, trucks carrying away timber have been burnt, as in Jaldega (Gumla district) and in Santhal Paraganas recently (1987 and 1988). The burning of contractors' trucks has, at least temporarily, halted the cutting of forests.

In the current round of Survey and Settlement operations (which have been stalled in many parts, particularly in the *khuntkatti* areas of Ranchi dstrict) there have been a number of demands related to forests. In both *khuntaktti* and other areas there has been opposition to these operations on the grounds that the government could use them to arbitrarily change the boundaries of reserved forests. By changing these boundaries the right, existing under the CNT Act, to reclaim village or government *gair mazurwa* land for cultivation, could be lost as this land could be declared "reserved forest" in which such reclamation is not allowed. A related demand is to allot titles to those who have so reclaimed land, which they still hold without any title, but only on the basis of their traditional right.

Village rights over forests are a feature of the Mundari *khuntkatti* areas. In Porhat block of Singhbhum, however, the *khuntkattidars* do not have this right over the forest. In the late seventies the Munda

khuntkattidars of Porhat launched an agitation to establish their claim to the forests. (Singh, 1982, 20) In other parts there has been the demand to register the village as one that has proprietory rights in the forests. This movement is strong in those villages where there has earlier been some agreement between the landlord and the village community, whereby, though the landlord was the proprietor, the village community had definite rights registered in *rakhat* jungle. The demand is that in place of the former landlords, the village community and not the state, should be registered as owner of the forests.

There have thus been a number of agitations to assert the right of the village community to the forests, to use them for traditional and commercial gathering and also to convert them into agricultural lands, as and when required. At the same time, it is also true that forest issues have not received the same attention that agrarian (land) issues have. It is likely that the reason for this lies not just in the relative importance of land and forests in the economy of the region, but also in the specific composition of the leadership of these movements. The movements have been led by the upper section of adivasi society. This section, or class (though all the features of class formation are not quite present) has been that of the village chief, *munda*, or the village priest, *pahan*. To an extent the leadership may have gone down to the *khuntkattidars*. But for this whole section, the forest as source of gathering is less important, than as potential land for agriculture. Rights to reclaim forests are more important for the top section of adivasi society, than gathering rights. It is the lower sections of Jharkhandi society (including the non-tribals, *sadans*, of the former artisan castes who have been displaced by capitalist industry) who depend relatively more on gathering from the forest. This upper class composition of the leadership of the adivasi movements may explain why forest issues have not played as important a role as one might expect from the position of the forest in Jharkhandi economy.

Another possible factor is that women, who have traditionally been excluded from adivasi politics, have more to do with gathering and sale of forest produce than do men. Before discussing women's role in adivasi politics, we will discuss some other aspects of their social position.

10

Social Relations

To what extent is the observed deterioration in women's position with regard to property and income, particularly land (and not so much income from gathering), accompanied by a deterioration in women's position in social relations? Social is here taken to include the whole gamut of relations of marriage, sexuality, freedom of movement, and so on. Aspects of the political position of women and of the effects of political movements on their position will be dealt with separately. While there is no necessary relation between the labour contributed and social position—for between the two come property relations—one can expect a relation between changes in control over property and income and changes in the social position of women. A decline in women's position with regard to control over property and income can be expected to lead to a corresponding decline in their control over other aspects of their existence.

The first thing that would strike a visitor from the plains about the markets in Jharkhand is the considerable presence of women in the market. Women are retail vendors of vegetables, and other produce ; they come to sell their forest products to the merchants in the market. They make weekly purchases for their families. Young girls, dressed in their colourful best, almost invariably with flowers in their hair, not only go about their business of buying and selling, but even more importantly, meet with young boys from other villages. Most marriages are decided in these market meetings. The market, thus, is a very important social space in Jharkhand, not only for the men, as it is in the plains, but also for the women.

In fact, it has been pointed out by Anvita Abbi (1991, 8) that among Kharia speakers, in opposition to the usual pattern in the plains, men rather than women, retain a higher proportion of archaic words in their speech. This, we would think, is definitely due to the greater marketing activity of women, to their interaction with merchants, who are invariably speakers of Indo-Aryan languages.

The role of the market as an important social space for women is not restricted to the adivasis alone, though it very much flows from the tribal tradition of women being as much, if not more involved in marketing, than men. To a lesser degree the non-tribals have partly accepted these tribal values and to a greater degree than is possible in the plains, women from the *sadan* (non-tribal) castes also come to the market. In the case of some tribes like the Kherwar, which as mentioned, have travelled somewhat further along the route to becoming a caste, women have been more or less withdrawn from marketing and thus from the market as a place of social interaction. It is no accident that in these tribes marriages are invariably arranged by the parents, without any consideration for the consent of the girls, and that these girls are married before they reach puberty.

In order to understand the significance of adivasi women's interaction with and in the market, we should compare the above with a description of women's relation to the market in a region of full-fledged Hindu society:

> The bazar is perhaps at the bottom of the league in terms of how far the women feel that it is safe and dignified for them to venture there. Many women, of course, must visit the bazar; they could not manage if they did not. But they hurry about their business there and return home briskly. They do not choose the bazar as a meeting place for the exchange of news and gossip in the way that men do. (Ursula Sharma, 1980, 42)

There are a number of aspects of social existence in which there is a marked difference between adivasi society in Jharkhand and the caste society of the plains as also a difference between women and men within adivasi society. Male children are desired for example, but there is no regret at the birth of a female child. Certainly something like female infanticide is unheard of. Importance is placed on having children as a means of carrying on the family (*khunt*) line. The failure of a woman to bear children is adequate ground for a man to marry a second time in most of the tribes. Among the non-agriculturist tribes like the Asur and Birhor there is no such special notion of propagating the family line. In case an Asur couple do not have a child, they just accept it as fate and do not resort to second marriages.

This difference with regard to having children or not is linked to the difference in the nature of production. Hunting-gathering does not have a temporal continuity. There are no material possessions for

parents to pass on to their children. In settled agriculture, with land being allotted to individual families, the land is a produced asset which implies a definite continuity between generations. This continuity requires a couple to have children. Female children, however, are no disadvantage in this system. Not only do they do a substantial part of the work, they also bring in a bride price on marriage. Further, if there are no sons a daughter can be married in *ghar jamai* style, thus providing continuity to the family line, even in the absence of sons. Children, not necessarily male, are important to the agriculturist tribes. Among the Mundari *khuntkattidars*, however, having a son is given somewhat more importance than it is, say, among the Santhal. *Ghar jamai* marriage is not so easy among the Mundas. The village community has to approve of it, and there are always male agnates waiting for an opportunity to get some more land.

The lack of a strong preference for sons does not necessarily mean that there is no discrimination between boys and girls. This may not be so in matters of food. But boys do get more time to play, unlike girls, who at an earlier age have to begin contributing to the family labour. Where the discrimination between boys and girls is most strongly reflected is in the modern sector of education. Female literacy among the adivasis lags considerably behind male literacy. When girls do go to school, they still have to perform a substantial amount of household labour, while boys are left free to study, play or otherwise develop themselves as they will.

The institution of the youth dormitory (*dumkeria* as it was called among the Oraons, or *giti ora* among the Mundas) is not found any more. Adolescent boys and girls may sleep in separate groups in some houses. There is a free mixing of boys and girls of the same age groups. Pre-marital sex is not frowned upon, though it is expected that the rules of clan exogamy and tribal endogamy will be observed. Menstrual taboos are not generally prevalent. The only menstrual taboo we found was that, among the Santhal, menstruating women are not supposed to go into the vegetable garden or make pickles—a taboo that seems to exist in many parts of the world. But there are none of the strict taboos that are so common in the patriarchal society of the plains.

Marriage is very much on the basis of individual choice, and may be a result of previous acquaintance. This is in sharp contrast to the marriage of caste society, where "The most honourable form of marriage is that where there is no element of prior sexual attraction

between the partners." (Sharma, 1980, 41) Marriages arranged by the parents have existed earlier but are now increasing. These are different from the arranged marriages of caste society, in that the consent of the partners is necessary. Parents cannot dispose of a daughter or son in marriage just as they would wish. There is a widespread use of *sindur* (vermilion) in marriage ceremonies. But, unlike in Hindu society, both bride and groom apply the *sindur* to each other.

Among the Kherwar, as mentioned earlier, the free mixing of youth of both sexes has more or less come to an end. Marriages are arranged by the parents and the consent of the partners is immaterial. The age of marriage too has fallen. Indeed, it is rare to find a Kherwar girl who is still unmarried at the time of puberty.

Purdah is unknown among the adivasis. There is free mixing and conversation with visitors: the only part of the house that visitors cannot enter is the hearth where food is cooked. This is a restriction on visitors who are not from that tribe and is related not to any idea of hiding women from visitors, but to the notion of pollution (of a caste type) by visitors who are not of that tribe. Women in the house may drink *haria* (rice beer) with their husbands or others. When serving food too, the women, after they have served the husband, children and others, sit and eat with the rest.

As is well known, community dancing is an important part of adivasi social life. This is in sharp contrast with the practice of caste society in the plains, where dancing is looked down upon as something done only by "professional" women who are virtual prostitutes. Both Hindu and Christian conversion movements advocated the rejection of community dancing. Christian adivasis had, under the influence of the missionaries, given up such dancing. It is only with the rise of the Jharkhand movement and its recent stress on the distinct identity of Jharkhandi culture, that converts to Christianity and Hinduism have begun to rediscover community dancing.

Divorce and remarriage are both possible. But a divorced woman is of lower status than another woman. Remarriage is generally easier for a divorced man than it is for a divorced woman who is known as *chadui kudi*, i.e. a woman who has been left or abandoned. She can, however, go back to her father's or brother's home. There her status is lower than that of other women in the house. As a worker she will, of course, be quite welcome. For a divorced woman ". . . the range of her husbands is greatly narrowed and although a fresh unmarried boy is greatly prized, it is usually only with widowers or with boys

who have themselves been divorced that marriage is arranged." (Archer, 1984, 267)

The lot of an adivasi widow is far better than that of a widow from caste society. Remarriage is not ruled out. Besides that, she enjoys definite rights in land, at times not less than those of her late husband. (see earlier discussion of land rights of women.) With the decline in widows' land rights and its degradation to a right to be maintained, there is a definite fall in the social status of widows. In some areas (mentioned by Munda women in Maranghada, Ranchi district) widows are now looked down upon and their participation in and presence during marriage ceremonies is considered "inauspicious".

The changes in social position and social practices of women have been most extensive in the case of Oraon and Kherwar. Bride price has more or less disappeared among these tribes, and has been replaced by dowry. Dowry is making its presence felt in other tribes too, especially in the case of boys who have jobs in the modern sectors of government and industry. But the change is more extensive among the Oraon and Kherwar, being widespread not only among the families of those employed in jobs but also among agriculturist families. Beating up of women by their husbands has become noticeable, though it is still far from being accepted as the prerogative of the latter. Women do protest against beating and the matter can be taken up before the village panchayat, or other councils.

All in all there is a noticeable deterioration in the social position of women in these adivasi communities, one that is more marked in the case of the Oraon and Kherwar tribes than the other tribes like Santhal, Munda and Ho. In summary form this can be seen in the fact that the sex ratio among the adivasis of Jharkhand, though still favourable to women, is nevertheless declining. (K.S.Singh, 1988, 8)

As mentioned earlier with reference to witch-hunting, there is general bias in adivasi society against women. The controls over all aspects of women's existence, characteristic of caste society, are not, however, present among the adivasis. There is a fair degree of autonomy for women in arranging their lives, their work, movements, marriage, and so on. But that does not mean that they have a position equal to that of men. We have already seen this in respect of religion and ritual. In general social life too there is such inequality. Jokes reflect prevalent attitudes. "Why do women use both hands to wash their face, and men only one?" The answer is, "Because women have two lords, singbonga and their husbands." (Van Exem, 1982, 251) The

adivasi husband does not have the same authority over his wife that the husband in caste/class society has. But it is not as though he has no authority at all.

Many practices make clear the lower, dependent position of women. When a woman violates any of the sexual norms, it is her father or husband who has to pay. Extra-marital sexual relations on the part of a woman are considered a violation of the husband's rights. Extra-marital relations on the part of a man on the other hand, are not taken as seriously. Again, if a man commits the sin of having sexual relations with a non-tribal, he can be readmitted into the tribe on breaking off relations with the non-tribal woman and paying a fine. A woman who has sexual relations with a non-tribal cannot, however, be readmitted into the tribe. This attitude too is a forerunner of what we see in caste society, where caste status is associated with the "purity" of women.

Many of these practices have lost their earlier force. But the point is that the seeds of inequality have been present in adivasi society, albeit not in the developed form of full control over all aspects of a woman's existence as we find in caste/class society. It is, however, in the interaction of Jharkhandi society with the state formations of the plains—initially with the Mughal raj and much more so with British colonialism—that this society has evolved in the direction of a patriarchy. Movements of the Christian missionaries and Hindu "Sanskritizers" deliberately fostered the practices of patriarchal, class society. But, more important, movements of the adivasis that tried to meet the challenges of the colonial and post-colonial states, also sought to increase male control and take the society in the direction of establishing patriarchal systems of man-woman relations. Recently, however, with a growing consciousness of the special features of adivasi culture and society, as compared to "mainstream" Indian society, and with the beginnings of a separate organization of Jharkhandi women, this picture has begun to change and the political movement for Jharkhand has begun to address itself, however partially and fitfully, to the question of how to strengthen the position of women in Jharkhandi society.

11

Political Movements and Women

The political system of the agriculturist-gatherer tribes traditionally excludes women. They participate in the village assemblies, panchayats, only when they are parties to a case, or are called as witnesses. At the same time, in some situations women can become village chief, *munda*, or village priest, *pahan*. This can be as widows, when their husbands have been *munda* or *pahan*. There have been women *mundas* in the Khunti-Tamar area of Ranchi. Rekha Dhan (1961) mentions a woman *manki* (head of a group of villages) among the Hos of Saranda. A woman may be given this position only in instances where there are no male chilren, or where the sons are not yet majors. But, even then, as with a *pahan*, her position is more symbolic, and she cannot officiate at all pujas.

It is among the hunter-gatherer tribes, like the Birhor or the Korwa, that the political system includes women on a regular basis, though they are excluded from leadership. Among the agriculturist tribes (though they do also carry on a fair amount of gathering) women are excluded from the public sphere of politics. In the Kol rebellion of the 1830s in Singhbhum, one of the major aspects of the revolt was "avenging of the honour of tribal women." (Mitra, 1984, 55) "After the crushing of the uprising many of the rebels confessed that their main aims were to avenge the lost Hoormat (honour) of their women and the exactions to which they had been subjected." Women participated in large numbers in the rebellion, "both in campaigns and in keeping open the lines of supply and information." When the British troops under Captain Wilkinson unleashed a reign of terror, they set fire to houses in villages harbouring rebels and ". . . the women perished rather than disclose information to the British soldiers. In many instances women organised the defence of their villages and withstood pressure for a period of time before being forced to surrender. Many women were arrested by the British authorities. They were kept

in custody till such times as the men were arrested." (Mitra, 1984, 56)

In the great Santhal rebellion of the 1850s, many women were killed or arrested. Women, along with children were part of the 30,000 that set out to march to Calcutta. They were also invariably members of the raiding parties that attacked the homes of the enemies. In this respect, Ranajit Guha points out, ". . . the communality of the hool [rebellion] exceeded that of a hunt." (1983, 131) The hunt, among the Santhals, was an exclusively male affair, the women only provided the men with provisions and ceremonially welcomed them on their return. In the *hul*, however, ". . . the men busied themselves with the rough and heavy job of wrecking enemy property while the women gathered the loot—a replication, no doubt, of the standard division of labour between the sexes at harvest time." (Guha, 1983, 131)

While the first job of being part of raiding parties, even if basically as non-combatants, was a departure from the traditional labour roles of women (although the job of gathering the loot was an extension of women's role in the harvest) the other jobs which women did, were simple extensions of their daily work. They were obviously the providers for the fighters and also acquired information for them: ". . . the entire female population of the Santal districts in 1855 could have been accused of acting as the providers and as the eyes and ears of the rebel forces. . . " (Guha, 1983, 132)

The extension of women's roles from the traditional ones into participation in the raiding parties does not seem to have been accompanied by any extension of women's political roles. On the contrary, the Santhal *hul* featured many attacks on women as witches. According to the account of Chotrae Desmanjhi, who participated in the rebellion at the age of 14 or 15, there was "a concerted drive against witches in their midst." (Archer, 1945, 21) Chotrae Desmanjhi also mentions that the two brothers, Sidhu and Kanhu, leaders of the rebellion, also sexually used any girl, unmarried or married, who caught their fancy.

Altogether what it shows was that in the process of fighting British colonialism, the Santhal rebellion was also taking the community in the direction of strengthening or establishing male domination in political and social spheres. As noted earlier, of all the tribes under consideration, the Santhals had the greatest component of shifting agriculture in their economic system (Prabhu Mahapatra, 1989) and the greatest extent of equality between the sexes. The necessity of abolishing an alternate form of social/political organization may

explain why the struggle to establish male domination was so fierce in the Santhal tribe. After the Santhal rebellion, "it became the fashion among the more wealthy Santals to imitate the usage of high-caste Hindus and marry their daughters between the age of eight and twelve." (Risley, 1931, 228-29) According to Risley, this practice, however, did not take root and "it is now very unusual for a girl to be married before she attains puberty."

In contrast to the overt violence against women in the Santhal rebellion, the Munda uprising of the end of the nineteenth century had a strong puritanical streak about it. Birsa Munda and his followers in the Birsaite religion opposed many of the traditional Munda practices. The evils of Munda society were traced to the worship of spirits (*bongas*) and the drinking of rice-beer (*haria*). (K.S.Singh, 1983, 157) Birsa attacked the system of spirits and the priesthood of *deonras, bhagats* and *sokhas*. In the place of the *pahan*, the village priest, Birsa substituted the group authority of the *panches*, the village committee. Birsa attacked the *akhara*, the dancing ground, and the *giti ora*, the dormitory for youth. Birsa's aim was to revive the "golden age" of the Mundas, and for this he considered it necessary to oppose all the above practices and institutions which he held responsible for the fall of the Mundas. One of the features of this pristine age was that there was no violence against women. Birsa's religion was thus a combination of puritanism and revivalism. (K.S.Singh, 1983, 182)

With regard specifically to women's questions Birsa asked tribal men to give up the practice of marrying more than once (a practice, that, as we have seen, was mainly indulged in by the upper section of Munda society). The prescribed marriage ceremony was an equal one, with both man and woman applying *sindur* (vermillion) on each other. The moral rules he prescribed were the same for both sexes.

Women played a substantial role in the uprising. They were not merely followers, going along with the raiding parties, but in the Birsaite uprising they were frequently fighters. Birsa's constant companion, Sali, was an organizer in the struggle. Many women participated in the meetings. When some 7,000 men and women gathered at Chalkad, they were all armed. (Mitra, 1983, 66 and K.S.Singh, 1983)

The role of women as fighters is clear from the accounts of the movement. When the police set fire to the house of one of the leaders of the movement, Gaya Munda:

> This brought the defenders out at once. The family in arms came out:

> Gaya with a sword, Maki his wife with a long lathi, their little sons with a bulwa, grandson Ramu 14 years old with a bow and two arrows, the two daughters-in-law with a dauli and a tangi respectively and the three daughters Thigi, Nagi and Lembu with a lathi, a sword and a tangi respectively.

The account goes on to say, "Each of the women fought desperately before she could be disarmed but we shortly had the whole lot under arrest. I may add that two at least of the women had small babies in their left arms while brandishing axes with their right." (S.C.Roy, 1912)

Birsa's puritanical programme was influenced by his contact with Christianity. He had rejected Christianity as a religion, probably because of the failure of the Church to restore the adivasis' lands in the petitioning struggle of the traditional leaders (Sardari *larai*) that preceded and laid the ground for the Birsaite uprising. But rejecting the Church did not mean a full rejection of Christian practices and preachings. His puritanical programme certainly shows the influence of the Christian missionaries and their prescriptions for good behaviour. He expressed the need to put an end to some anti-woman practices in order to restore the former glory of the Mundas. The vision of what this glory entailed was not so much one of a restoration of past values as it was one of emulating practices of the "superior" Hindu-cum-Christian society with which Munda society was in contact. This is why Birsa's vision of glory had a strong puritanical content to it.

Further, the call in Birsa's programme was not to the women to resist the various anti-women actions. Such resistance would certainly have strengthened women and given them a political position in the movement. Rather, Birsa's appeal was to the Munda men to give up such practices as demeaning. Essentially, the opposition to anti-women practices was articulated in such a way as would enhance the position of men, and thus of Munda society, in the world around them.

The beginnings of articulating the problems of women within tribal society were made much later, in the early seventies with A.K.Roy of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM). "There was here a positive assertion of the rights of women to economic independence and liberation from oppression by men in family and society." (Manoshi Mitra, 1983, 82) But this view expressed within the Jharkhand movement did not have much of an impact on the course of the movement.

For the dominant trend in the JMM, represented by Sibu Soren, "the women's question was important again as part of the movement for upliftment of tribal society from its degradation." (Mitra, 1983, 88)

Women did participate in large numbers in the campaigns of the JMM, including seizure of land, harvesting of paddy on land appropriated by the moneylenders, recovery of pawned articles, and so on. They participated in the village councils that decided on these actions: ". . . at the high point in the struggle (late 1960s and early 1970s) the baisies [village councils] were very democratic institutions in which women and men participated in deciding courses of action." (Mitra, 1983, 90)

These village councils, however, were not the institutions that decided the course of the movement. In the higher organizations of the JMM which is where key decisions were taken, women were not present. Thus, in a sense, women's participation at the lower, village-level discusssions helped to mobilize them for action, without their being able to influence the course of the movement. Such participation was, as Manoshi Mitra points out, similar to the institutions of the tribal community in the pre-sixteenth century period. "In both women had the right to be heard, to demand justice, to take part in the deliberations of the general assembly, but not to take part in any decision-making." (1983)

It was in the specifically "women's programmes", such as anti-liquor and anti-wife-beating campaigns, that women were associated with the leadership. Campaigns against witch-hunting too were taken up. "But this was not based on an understanding of women as equals, but rather on the reasoning that such practices were degrading for the tribal society and rendered them low in their eyes and of those of the Hindu rulers. Consequently the view was that 'it was essential to eliminate these to assert the equal position of the tribal male with the Hindus'." (Mitra, 1983, 96)

The patriarchal intent in these "improvement" campaigns, is revealed by the actions of the JMM in the matter of sexual assault by *dikus* or the outside exploiters.

> It was patriarchal ideology of the honour of the males, of society which needed to be protected. The women were to be restricted in their freedom of movement. This meant that they could now move only with male escort. Women were also not allowed to go out of the village to work on the fields. This resulted in assaults on women attempting to go to work by the village volunteers. This brought

> about a situation when these women would run away whenever they saw these volunteers in anticipation of being "punished". Women were thus regarded as vehicles of physical and cultural reproduction who had to be at worst controlled and at best protected. This outlook logically led to the housewifisation process which appeared at a later stage. (Mitra 1983, 97)

Like the Christian church, the JMM too took up a programme of teaching domestic crafts to women such as cookery, stitching, emr-boidery,etc. Housewifization requires the women to become good wives and mothers, so they were being trained to do these jobs better. The attempt to enforce conformism to patriarchal norms went further than the "punishment" to women going out on their own. Once again in the name of preventing the "sexual and moral corruption of tribal women by non-tribal men", women either divorced or separated, working in the collieries or engaged in petty trade, were first warned that they should marry. If they refused to obey, they were beaten up and even married off to someone chosen by the cadres and sent away from their homes and worksites to distant areas where the new "husbands" resided. "This is a novel form of devaluing women under the guise of enforcing sexual morality and has given rise to corrupt practices. Women willing to pay Rs.1,000 per month were spared." (Mitra, 1983, 114) Corruption apart, what is important to note is that clearly patriarchal norms of control over the sexuality and movements of women, and their housewifization were an integral part of the JMM movement.

Of the more recent Jharkhand organizations, the Jharkhand Kranti Dal (JKD) in its programmme has nothing about women in Jharkhand, other than a reference to the problem of women being driven into prostitution. The general line of the JKD has been that problems within the community should be taken up in the traditional institutions of the people and should not be taken to the state. But within this position too they have not advocated land rights for women. In Sinhgbhum there have been instances of the JKD and allied organizations supporting the demand of widows to a life interest in land. In both Singhbhum and Palamu there have been instances of the JKD taking up struggles against witch hunting and in defence of those branded as witches. Along with these positive actions, there has been no advocacy of the specific demand of land rights for adivasi women. Instead, as stated by a JKD activist, "Our aim is socialism. So we are opposed to the demand of land rights for women. That demand will

only lead to tension within the Jharkhand movement." (Xavier from Gumla at Gomia workshop.)

The fact is that there does now exist individual male ownership, though with restrictions on alienation, and that even where there is some form of village ownership, the land is still possessed by individual males. In a modification of this land system, the demand is raised that land should also be allotted to women. This demand stands on a footing different from that of a socialist land system, one where there is be no individual ownership of land at all and where income is be on the basis of labour contribution. To mix up these two systems of land ownership is a way of using the perspective of socialism to deny the current requirement of land allotment to women as to men, in order to strengthen the position of women within the family and in society too.

Women in the JKD apart from being active in campaigns and movements, particularly bandhs and road blockades, have also been going out of their villages as organizers in the area. This has met with some opposition from their homes and others in the villages, with aspersions being cast on their sexual morality. Free movement by women in the region of the village, for accepted purposes, such as marketing, is a part of adivasi life. But politics is traditionally the preserve of men. So, there is not the same acceptance of women who do political work. Those who have gone out as organizers are mainly all unmarried. For married women it would be difficult to put aside household work and take up organizational work. Usually what happens is that the men go out for political work and as a result the burden of looking after the home and fields falls much more on the women. Women organizers in the JKD are members of the local committees, both at block and district levels. There are also some women in the central committee, but none in decision-making positions. So, the pattern of women being mobilized for the Jharkhand movement without being able to infuence its course or having any say in decision-making continues.

The All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) and the Jharkhand Coordination Committee (JCC) both have some women in their committees. But, again, none in decision-making positions. The AJSU Declaration (1988) upholds the "prevailing equal rights" of women with men. That the "prevailing" rights are actually unequal, though less unequal than in the caste society of the plains, is not recognized. The declaration also refers to encouraging widow remarriage and

paying special attention to women's literacy. Overall, however, the position is not one of striving for an equal place for women in the movement, family and society. The JCC in its Declaration (1987) refers to "economic deprivation and sex exploitation" of Jharkhandi women. It advocates the activization of the traditional institutions like village panchayats and traditional leaders of the Manki-Munda system. But there is no proposal to extend the traditiional institutions to include the full participation of women, participation not only in discussions but also in decision-making.

A Position Paper in 1989 gives the situation of adivasi women as an indicator of the relatively egalitarian system that prevails in Jharkhand.

> . . . despite the fact that tribal and indigenous societies here are patrilineal and patrilocal, the role of the women is never undermined, particularly in matters of running the household and arranging marriages. Contrary to the practice elsewhere in the country, a bridegroom's people have to pay a brideprice to the bride's people—not to purchase her but to assist the bride's family by sharing the expenses of feeding the guests, for the wedding ceremony takes place at the bride's place. There are other occasions when a woman can participate on an equal footing with men. For instance, she can officiate at all occasions of worship offered to different spirits of the family, village fields and forests.

The above account is useful as an indicator of the difference in the social system of Jharkhand, chiefly of the adivasis, as compared to that of the plains, where there are fully established patriarchal norms. In terms of the future, the discussion in the JCC has centred around the issue of "regeneration" of Jharkhand. The values that characterize tribal identity have been held, for instance by Ram Dayal Munda (1986) or Nirmal Minz (1986), to be harmony with nature, equality in society and collectivism in economic activites. In this discussion on cultural regeneration there has been little note of necessary changes in the position of women. Recently, perhaps as a result of discussions initiated in and by the Jharkhand Mahila Mukti Samiti (JMMS), some note has been taken of the necessity of changing adivasi custom to include women's right to land.

The Jharkhand Mahila Mukti Samiti was formed in 1987. In its conferences and workshops it has raised a number of questions about women's role in Jharkhandi society and in the Jharkhand movement.

While the JMMS is a constituent member of the JCC, it has begun the process of establishing a distinct identity for women within the Jharkhand movement. The question of equal land rights for women has aroused the most discussion, both within and without the organization.

Questions about the property (land) rights of women and women's political participation have figured in both the conferences (1987 and 1988) of the Jharkahnd Mahila Mukti Samiti. They were also discussed in a workshop at Gomia in July 1989. Leading women cadres of the Jharkhand movement have written about them. Thus, these questions are not just being raised by those outside the movement. Taking account of the changing expectations of women will strengthen the tribal community, while it is precisely failure to take account of these that will weaken it. Regeneration cannot be thought of as a recreation of the past, which is in any case not possible. Regeneration, while reviving principles of collectivism and equality, principles that have almost disappeared, can only be successful as the creation of a new society.

12

Conclusion

The analysis in this study has shown up some of the features of the varying positions of women in the adivasi communities of Jharkhand. How do we identify and characterize the changing positions, the factors behind the changes and the possibilities for future development?

The foraging (gatherer-hunter) tribe of Birhor already exhibit a clear division of labour. This is most specific in the case of child-rearing and the preparation of food in the home. At the same time, in this and in other activities as well, there do not exist the strict taboos and strong notions of what is and what is not, say, man's work. There is a large element of sharing in the jobs, including "housework". The importance of this organization of labour, which may be called the gender system, is that each individual is relatively autonomous in his/her own sphere. There does exist a general dominance of men over women, which is reflected in the male monopoly of leadership positions, but this dominance does not extend to all spheres of women's activity. Women have a considerable autonomy in decisions about their production, consumption and mobility. Control over sexuality, reflected in marriage rules and rights over women, is not so prominent in this tribe. Though patrilocality is the norm of post-marriage residence, it is not a strict rule.

It is also true that men monopolize leadership positions, although women participate as full members of the councils of the band. Violence against women, for transgression of male authority or assertion of female rights, is unknown. There is little accumulation and property. Consequently the control over reproductive labour, and the concern for the perpetuation of the family and lineage (*khunt*), do not figure in the social system of this tribe.

Among the tribes we have studied none is among those who are mainly shifting cultivators. Thus we cannot say anything about the nature of sexual and other social relations in systems of shifting

agriculture. The tribes we have analysed are all settled cultivators, with a continuing component of a form of shifting agriculture as well as a substantial reliance on gathering.

With settled agriculture there is some scope for accumulation. Though the land is often, even today, the property of the village community, it is nevertheless allocated to and held by individual families. Rather than the clan or band possessing a piece of land, it is the lineage (*khunt*) that is the actual possessor. With this a two-fold distinction is introduced. The second is that betweeen the superior lineages of the original settlers (*khuntkattidars*) and other subsidiary agriculturists, the first is between owning and non-owning producers, between men and women.

Men owned the land and strict rules of residence ensured patrilocality. This enabled men, particularly of the senior lineages, to utilize and appropriate women's labour for accumulation within the male line. For women, labour did not mean ownership, the two were separate. In fact, the very possibility of women expending their labour power on land, now depended (as it did not under foraging) upon their relation to men, whether fathers or husbands. Establishing male ownership of land was the first "class struggle".

Male control over the process of agricultural production is reflected in the strong taboo against women ploughing, in some cases against women even touching the plough. Male control over the produce of the land is seen strongly in the Munda custom, whereby the male head of the household alone has the right to take grain out of the storage bin (*mora*).

There was a residual female right to land, in the form of a life interest of widows in land. This, while it gave some dignity through managment of production and control over consumption to widows, did not affect the process of accumulation, which continued undisturbed in the male line. Apart from economic activities, differences are also observed in ritual and political spheres. Women are excluded from the higher ritual spheres and from decision-making in politics. The community is essentially a male community.

From our analysis we are unable to say whether differentiation in the spheres of arms, politics and ritual preceded or succeeded differences in the economic sphere. But the strong connection between the economic and political systems, both of which exclude women, is obvious. This exclusion is a crucial break in the transition from gender to patriarchy.

At the same time the break in the overall economic and social system was not and is still not, complete. The complete propertylessness, lack of control over the person, including consumption and sexuality, that characterizes women in the formation of the caste system has not been established among the tribes that we have looked at. More correctly, it has not been established among all the tribes of Jharkhand. That situation of the patriarchal family, wherein, according to Manu (R.S.Sharma, 1983, 48), the wife, the son and the slave are all unpropertied and whatever they earn is the property of those to whom they belong, this kind of complete right enjoyed by the male head of the family over his wife was, and is, absent in these tribal communities.

Although the sytem of settled agriculture with land as male property had been established, an important question for historical investigation is why this economic and social system did not continue along the line of extinguishing all forms of autonomy that women had. Here, we can make some suggestions on the basis of our earlier analysis.

In the land system the community remained and remains the paramount owner. This has limited the scope for the development of individual forms of property, which alone could, perhaps, have developed into full-fledged private property. The tribal rebellions and the consequent legislations under colonial rule, have helped to preserve, to an extent, these forms of collectivism.

To the extent that collectivism was not preserved, there was a sharp decline in the "life interest" land rights of women, chiefly widows. The clash between the alienable land rights of men and the usufructuary life interest of women has led to a degradation of this life interest into mere maintenance. This is a situation not very different from that of the patriarchal family. In the matter of agriculture, thus, we can see the degradation of women's rights that is necessary to establish patriarchy. This condition is much more advanced among the Oraon and Kherwar (who have little left of community forms of land), than among the Santhal, Munda or Ho.

The economy of these adivasi communities has, however, not been a purely agrarian one. Gathering played, and continues to play, an important role in their economy. Access to forests, the source of gathering, is not mediated in the way that access to land is. Any member of the community, male or female, can apply his/her labour to gathering. This cannot be applied equally, as a number of the

resources are on private lands. But in these tribes, the system of the income from gathering accruing to the one who performs the labour has continued. Among them, unlike the experience analysed by Leacock for the North American tribes, women who perform the major part of the labour in gathering have not been displaced from the job of selling the gathered produce. Thus, even where commercial production has replaced production for direct use, it has not been accompanied by a displacement of women from marketing. Women consequently still retain some control over income and their own consumption.

This may be the central reason why women in these tribes have not been completely devalued. We should here note the different experience of tribes such as the Kherwar, whose involvement in gathering is not much less than that of the others, but where there has been a distinct displacement of women from marketing. The difference in the case of the Kherwars and the Oraon, may be that their communal land systems had broken down much earlier and these tribes were already further advanced on the way to establishing a patriarchy when they took to substantial production for sale.

Though the initial conditions were established for developing private property and patriarchy, they were not developed to the fullest extent, as happened in the principal agrarian societies in the plains. A similar situation obtains with regard to the state. Stratification had developed and with it hereditary offices. But there was no endogenous formation of a ruling class and state. The exogenous character of the state and the consequent flow of surpluses outwards, was very much intensified in the colonial period; it continues to a considerable extent now. The drawing away of surplus from this region to the outside economy was also a factor that hampered the development of full-fledged private property, patriarchy and the state.

Patriarchy is not simply control over women's labour in the sphere of reproduction, rather it is control over their total labour. Women do not control accumulation; but they also lose any autonomy in both the labour process and in consumption. What is instituted by patriarchy is a relation of production within the family, whereby women's labour is exchanged for consumption, which, in turn, is determined by the male head of the household.

In the gender relation of foraging there is a division of labour into somewhat "separate but equal" spheres, with an overall male domination. But in the patriarchal relation women lose any autonomy in

their own spheres, and the results of their production, their own consumption, and aspects of social existence, such as marriage and freedom of movement, all come under male control.

We may now pose the question: what is it that plays the crucial role in establishing patriarchy, the appropriation of the labour of women as "reproducers", or their labour as producers? In the agriculturist-cum-gatherer tribes the function of reproduction has already gained a certain importance, as distinct from the forager tribes, for whom this is not much of a consideration. With the development of senior lineages of "original settlers", not merely reproduction, but reproduction of male heirs becomes important to perpetuate the line. Male control, however, is not restricted to female labour in reproduction. There is a growing control over labour in production too—while income in gathering is somewhat autonomously controlled, income from agriculture, increasingly becomes the exclusive province of men. The object of male control is not just that part of women's labour as "reproducers"; rather, it is the entire labour of women, whether for production or reproduction.

In the period of tribal society, we can observe changes in the control over labour: from the relative autonomy of those who labour, to a step-by-step institution of full male control over agricultural income. The accumulation that results from agricultural labour is under male control, and involves the alienation of the labour of women, which they perform as labourers, but the product of which they do not control as owners.

Alienation is a relation where the product of labour is appropriated by someone other than the labourer, by the owner of the property. This is usually understood in a class sense, where the labourer and the owner of property are not the same. This concept of alienation can be extended to the family, where women have a mediated relation to the means of production, as a result of which, the product of their labour is not theirs to be disposed of as they wish. Such alienation can occur even within the family of an exploited class, in which the women in this family will then be subject to a double alienation, the first by the owner of the dominant property and the second by the head of the household.

Using the concept of such alienation to look at the position of women in the Jharkhandi tribes we have analysed, we can say that alienation of women's labour within the family is still partial, that full alienation, which is characteristic of patriarchy, has not been estab-

lished here. The reasons for this absence lie in the importance of gathering, and the continuation of forms of communal property in land.

The process of alienation of women's labour within the family is accompanied by a corresponding control over aspects of women's social existence, over marriage, sexuality, free movement, and so on, along with the regular use of violence to "keep women in their place".

This control also develops over a number of stages and is not instituted all at once. When hunting becomes a male activity there is an injunction on wives to remain chaste while their husbands are away, so as not to jeopardize the success of the hunt. With settled agriculture and family-plots there is concern for reproducing children at the familial level, so as to be able to pass on the land. While pre-martial sex is approved, extra-martial sex comes in for strong disapproval. Even in sexual matters women are reduced to the status of juniors—it is the father, husband or brother who is responsible for paying the fines that are imposed if women deviate from the sexual "norm".

It is with the establishment of class (caste) society that the negation of women's control over sexuality is taken to the extreme—pre-puberty marriages become the accepted norm of caste society, and women's sexuality is a dangerous quality, something to be strictly controlled, with the authority instituted in the male head of the family. Whether it is in relation to male alienation of women's labour, private property, or male control over women's sexuality, all of which are aspects of patriarchy, there are many stages of development. In the long period of tribal society many changes take place in all these and other fields, including the institution of the state. Thus, to locate change as only being brought about by the sudden development of private property, the state and the family is clearly incorrect. But correcting this notion and identifying the changes that do occur in the period of tribal society, should not lead us to the other, and more serious, error of seeing only continuity in the change and no sharp breaks in the process. This, in fact, is the method of analysis that allows some scholars to assert that Indian society, meaning by that the caste society, that has developed historically in the plains, is that is embodied in the "feminine principle". In fact, caste is the negation of the tribal system of communal property. It is also a negation of any autonomy for women—men take charge not only outside, but in the home too. In both of these, private property and patriarchy, while it

is true that there is some measure of change in tribal society, there is no denying that there is a sharp break that comes about with the formation of caste society. Land, for instance, was initially the common property of the caste group, the *gotra*; but this does not equate the *gotra* in its functions with the tribal clan. Aspects of commonality and self-management of the clan, are taken over but arranged into a new system of hierarchy, status and class exploitation, under a state system.

Again the strictness of tribal endogamy is taken over into the caste system and becomes the cornerstone of the notion of the "purity of women", which is related to the "purity of caste". That tribes, or sections of tribes, were transformed into castes, accounts for the factor of caste, rather than the usual class formation, that accompanied the formation of patriarchy. But this is not to equate tribe with caste, rather to understand the transformations and negations that take place in turning a tribe into a caste.

Our concern in this book has been with the transformations that occur within tribal society. The transformation of tribe into caste is yet another subject, on which much work remains to be done.

This is the historically-known path of development which leads to the establishment of patriarchy. Is it, however, the only possible path of development? Or, can conscious decision and intervention fashion an alternative?

Just as patriarchy has been seen as the inevitable result of human development, it has also been assumed that capitalism is an inevitable stage of human history. Today, with the retreat of socialism it is said to be the "end of history". Even those who consider themselves socalists, would hold that it is only after crossing the capitalist phase that it would be possible to advance towards the form of collectivism, i.e. socialism. Any opposition to capitalist inroads is then taken as opposition to development, to human history. Movements opposed to what is called "development" in the Jharkhand region have thus been labelled as reactionary movements.

It is necessary to challenge such unlinear theories of development, and to point out that alternatives can be fashioned. It is not necessary that the survival of collectivism be first swept away by individial, bourgeois property in order to clear the ground for a subsequent socialism. Such survivals can be used, reinterpreted and strengthened to provide another path of development, a path in which the existing village communities need not be disintegrated. But this, ofcourse, is

not possible on the basis of what exists, or even of what may have been in the past. Rather, these institutions and practices will have to be reinterpreted in the light of present needs.

For instance, balance with nature is certainly a very necessary principle in order to re-establish ecological harmony. But this balance cannot now be on the basis of the old knowledge, which was essentially that of a system of production for immediate, direct use. This aim of balance would have to be acheived on the basis of the production needs of today, as decided by the communities involved. Similarly, the village community must also become more inclusive to include not only all men, but also all women. So, to uphold the old values of balance with nature and the community, is not to be a "revivalist", seeking to recreate the past; rather, it is to seek to rebuild the present order, to recreate old values of community and balance, values that have gone out of fashion.

Similarly, a relative equality between men and women can be re-established and strengthened. This requires not only the organization of economic and other such activities on the basis of the community, but a further modification of the allocation of resources to households. This allocation should be not to "households" as such, but to individual workers, men and women. Allocation to the household effectively means allocation to the male head of the housheold. This will then continue the present mediated relation of women to the means of production. Allocation to individuals, women and men, can, on the other hand, strengthen the relative position of women in the family.

Allocation of means of production to each individual, woman and man, strengthens, as A.K.Sen (1987) puts it, the breakdown position of the woman and thus secures a more favourable outcome within the household. In fact, the worst position of a woman would be that where she completely depends on a man for access to the means of production or income. A woman in such a position will be forced to accept a much less favourable outcome in the household, than a woman who had independent access to the means of production. Such independent access to the means of production, within the village community, can also remove the present necessary residence rule of patrilocality.

Strengthening the village community, while providing individual access of women and men to land and other productive resources, could then provide a beginning for a development that is not patriarchal.

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Glossary

abe Bongas	household spirits
adivasi	indigenous people
akhara	dancing ground
asurs	demons in forests
bahu	daughter-in-law
bayads	fellow clansmen
begar	unpaid labour
bhagat	spirit healer
bhkasht	land without a settled tenant
bhuinhari	privileged tribal peasants, a form of the breakdown of community ownership of land
bonga	spirit
chadui kudi	a woman who has been abandoned, divorced
chanda	tribute paid to the Chotanagpur Raj
dain	witch
dalit	downtrodden, refers to the untouchable castes
deonra	mundari word for witch-finder
devas	benevolent spirits gods
dheki	instrument for pounding paddy to separate grain from husk
diku	outsider, meaning exploiter
doab	inter-fluvial region between two rivers
don	good quality rice lands in the valleys
dumkeria	oraon dormitory for youth
fajhas	crown lands
gair mazurwa	government or village land
ghar jamai	son-in-law who stays in wife's house
giti ora	munda dormitory for youth
gotra	exogamous clan in caste system

gwala	cattle herder
haat	weekly market
haria	rice beer
hul	santhal word for revolt
ir arpa	unmarried daughter's share of harvest
jagir	land given for tax-collection
jan, jan guru	santhali word for witch-finder
jani shikar	ritual women's hunt held once in 12 years
katat	forests in which ordinary customary rights of collection and sale are freely exercised
khorposh	maintenance
khunt	lineage
khuntkattidar	descendants of original settlers; where the village land remains, the communal property of the lineage
kili	clan
korkar	right to reclaim, to convert forest into agricultural land
lo bir sendra	hunt in the burnt forest, after the jungle is burnt in March. This is the occasion of the general assembly of Santhal males, the final authority in all matters
madaid	mutual help in labour
majhi	santhal term for village headman
malguzari	land revenue
manjhihas	lands of the manjhi, the village headman
manki	headman of a group of villages
mora	storage bin for grain
munda	village headman among Hos and Mundas
ojha	medicine man, also witch-finder
pahan	village priest
pahnai land	land reserved for the village priest
panchayat	village assembly of males to decide village matters
pargana	organization of a group of some 20

	to 30 Santhal villages
parha	organization of a group of Munda villages, (usually 12 in number)
praja	peasants of subsidiary lineages, usually relatives on the female side
raiyats	tenant peasants in the Permanent Settlement
rakhat	forests in which customary rights, specially as regards cutting of wood for fuel or timber, are restricted
rakumat	feudal cesses
sadan	non-tribal castes, mainly artisans
sarna	sacred grove
sasandiri	burial ground
sindur	vermillion powder
singbonga	supreme being, or spirit
tanr	poor quality up-hill lands
teli	petty traders
tendu	a plant, whose leaves are used to roll *bidis*, local cigarettes
thana	police station
thekedar	contractor, revenue farmer
ulgulan	mundari term for revolt
vaid	healer

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'Deforestation and displacement for development projects have turned hundreds of thousands of Jharkhandis into destitutes, selling their labour for a pittance.'

Central to this study of Jharkhand, India's largest adivasi (tribal) region, is the deteriorating position of women. This book analyses changing gender roles and the rise of patriarchal tendencies in a society where external economic pressures are reducing adivasis' access to the agricultural land and forests on which they depend for subsistence. One result has been the evolution of patrilineal rights in land which, in turn, has become connected with male inspired witch-hunts as women struggle to retain their usufructuary land rights. New taboos against women's participation in remunerative types of labour have also emerged. Nevertheless, women's continuing control over income from a forest-based, gathering economy has prevented the full establishment of patriarchal institutions, and widespread political resistance is emerging in the form of demands for a separate Jharkhand state.

The authors stress the importance of women overcoming their present exclusion from participation in the management of forests and the importance of this in protecting both Adivasi society and the ecological balance in this strategic part of the Indian subcontinent.

Set in the context of the recent concerns of feminist and anthropological scholarship, and making comparisons with similar communities elsewhere in Asia, the authors raise important questions about the direction of social change and environmental stability in tribal societies subjected to the pressures of capitalist penetration.

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